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GRAHAM HUTTON: As Europe Sees Us



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As Europe Sees Us

by GRAHAM HUTTON

Illustrations by WALTER GOETZ

In interpreting Europe Graham Hutton, best known as a broadcaster on economic and international affairs, has the great advantage, not only of education at French and German universities and of repeated visits to nearly every European country, but also of having seen both Britain and the Continent from the American Middle West—whence he returned a more confirmed European than ever

It is unfortunate for us, the British nation as a whole, that the political Labour Party's manifesto "European Unity" appeared simultaneously with His Majesty's Government's refusal to confer in Paris with half-a-dozen other nations on the Schuman Plan. It is unfortunate, not because of anything to do with this or any other particular plan, but because during the first five post-war years there has been a steadily-growing reaction from the virtual idolatry of Britain which prevailed abroad during and at the end of the war. Some reaction from that idolatry would have been necessary. We are only too human as a nation! But recent events have caused the European and American appreciation of us to fall to its lowest level since 1938.

I do not wish to enter into politics: *je ne discute pas, je constate!* but it is unfortunate that this *dénouement* should have come in our relations with Western Europe at the present juncture of world affairs, and just at the end of a steady five-year depreciation of our national stock in the eyes of our nearest neighbours. During those five years, and quite recently, it has been my duty and pleasure to discuss the problems of closer European, North Atlantic, and British-American integration very fully with Americans, our other subjects (or "citizens") in the Commonwealth, and Continental Europeans. In what follows I have tried to set forth, objectively, the gist of the most interesting talks I have recently had with Continental Europeans. I have set them forth under the country of the Continental neighbour. And I have indicated his personal background because, in all countries, a man's opinions arise from, and must be seen against, that background. I spare my readers *my* replies. They are not the burden of this article.

* * * * *

SWITZERLAND

A liberal-minded young (36) book-publisher summarized what most of the highly cultivated Swiss people, to whom I talked, were thinking: "We Swiss know only too

well how much insulation, isolation, and neutrality cost. We know it in taxes, and in the military service every year we have to perform, up to late middle-age. It is the only policy we can pursue. We are surrounded by Powers who would be involved in *any* war, and we're too small to be able to count on fair-dealing from *any* neighbour if we ever made an ally of one. But what I don't see is how you British can pursue such a policy, and remain even a significant Power in Europe, let alone the world. Look at your Commonwealth, to begin with—it's as if our 18 Cantons, or the 48 American States, were scattered all over the globe! And if you *must* give up your Empire or Commonwealth as a liability, surely you can't afford to let France—or, worse still, France and Germany and the three Benelux Powers—make the pace in Europe? We Swiss would rather live in a Europe run by you British—whether as 'principals' or as agents of America, or indeed as agents of *all* our Western world—than live in a Europe in which you British were half-in and half-out, the Americans were unreliable, and all our Continental neighbours were brawling about their own economic or other interests. Surely that's what's been wrong with all of us Europeans—including us Swiss—for all the centuries! Yet just when I thought we were all on the verge of getting the proper European Union we Swiss have always secretly wanted, the Union under Britain's leadership, the Union we just failed to secure in 1870 to 1914, you British throw the gears into reverse and try to become like the Swiss in the later Middle Ages! Remember: even we Swiss were defeated and occupied by a Napoleon!"

GERMANY

My informants from Germany vary from farmers to newspaper editors, from businessmen working under Allied supervision to pastors of Evangelical churches.

Steel-master in the Ruhr: "You British are almost always right. (You weren't when you fell for Hitler's early bluffing in 1933-36!)"



You act in diplomacy as your economic interests dictate, and your Socialists are well-fed and patriotic Britons before they are Socialists. So they have been steering clear of French and other continental doctrinaire planners, blue-printers, and Socialists. You British all understand—whether you are Conservative steel-masters or Socialist nationalizers of steel or Trade Unionists who don't really want to be socialized—that in the end it's your own people, not foreigners, who alone put you in power and keep you there; and that the mass of people in any country are really only concerned with the *immediate* prospect of bread-and-butter (*Butterbrot*). Give them some security for that, and you can work them for ever, and they'll even put up with "bread-and-scrape" (*Schmierstoff darauf*)! Hitler, Goering and Goebbels proved that, and you idealistic British—

Socialists as well as Conservatives—thought the German people would rise in revolt, led by the light of Kant's 'pure reason'! The trouble was, the Nazis were too much realists; so are the Communists now. But I think your Socialists are just about hard-headed enough. They're your real old traditional British 'John Bulls', putting patriotism first, and minding their own business. Still—I hope they won't pull out of the Continent altogether. I don't want to have to deal with the French—and the Americans behind them—alone! Still less, of course, with the Russians!"

Another—younger—Steel-master: "I wonder if you British have yet imagined a Continental Europe, as close to you by air today as another English county, but organized in their own interests by French and Germans. Because we have never yet done it, you

shouldn't think we *can't* do it. Personally, as a German, I'd prefer to be in any organization you British led. But I'd rather be in one led by the French than in none at all, these days! I can only see one thing: there's no future for us in Germany, or indeed us Europeans, in face of the massively-organized Russian world, except in *some* European organization. With or without you British, Europe will organize, to survive."

A German Woman Trade-Union Organizer: "I am a Christian Socialist, and nearing 60. I cannot understand the English. You criticized Americans for being isolationists after the First World War, and without the Americans you refused to join the French in organizing European security. Then, you were led by Liberals and Conservatives, and British Labour criticized them for their policies. Now, after this second war, when the Americans have abandoned isolationism and are subsidizing all of us in Europe, you in Britain, led by British Socialists, leave us

in Western Germany either to give in to the Communists of Russia who hold down our East German brothers, or to give in to the French Communists or 'Big Business' on the other side of us!"

Editor of a Learned Publication, aged 45: "I think your Government's policy of increasing 'insulation of the continent' has been right. Perhaps they have been most British in pursuing it by instinct, and not by thinking it out. (We Germans would have thought out a policy for years, and by then it would have been wrong!) But, as I see it, you distrust the federal principle, which the logical French want to clamp down on Western Europe once and for all, so no one can ever after escape. You are right to distrust that. The only ways Western Europe can federate are two: (1) as an *economic and legal and administrative entity*, as we all were in the Roman Empire (and have never been since); and (2) as a cultural, religious, feudal *federation of local self-sufficing units*, as we were for a thousand



years from the end of the Roman Empire to the rise of capitalism in the 15th and 16th centuries. Now we are neither a unitary legal and trading system—we haven't, as sovereign states, been run by others for four centuries—nor a lot of 'federable' self-sufficing units which could be loosely organized. If you British go your own way, it will *force* the French and the rest of us to act: to sink our petty differences and coagulate. If you came in, we would all blame you for everything, as we always have done! As things are, I think we shall progress more quickly."

A Middle-aged Aristocrat, imprisoned by the Nazis: "All democracies tend to become more and more nationalistic, not internationalistic. The more Socialistic they are, the more 'National-Socialist' they become. Witness Hitler! Witness Russia! The more you act by, through, and for 'the people', the more you have to attack foreign ideas, or foreigners, or boost your own excellences, or emphasize how much worse off *your* people would be if they had to be under foreigners' decisions. European unity? It can only come, as unity between nations or peoples has always come, by conquest, or by being *forced* on the units from outside. Our Spengler had the germ of the idea a generation ago, but your Toynbee puts it beautifully today. If you British are not prepared to join with the Americans and *force* a European pattern upon all of us, then the Russians will—either soon by force, or later by moving in on us after we've all collapsed separately."

FRANCE

The French seemed less aware of being a nation than any others.

General Manager of a Socialized Electricity Plant, aged 50: "I fought in both wars. I lost a boy in the last one, in the Resistance. I cannot see how we are to face Communism without Britain; yet I also cannot see how you British are to be solid with us under the Brussels, Atlantic and other defensive Pacts, but take no part in the integration of our West European basic industries, beginning with the iron and steel sinews of war. For me it is no question of politics or dogma. I am not a Socialist; I am M.R.P., and a Catholic; but I run a newly-socialized business which used to be privately owned; and I don't care who runs Britain—or Germany or Italy—as long as we organize, work, prepare, and (if necessary) fight in concert. Europe without Britain is not Europe; but, for me, France without her is not France, either!"

Journalist, aged 30, decorated for Resistance

work: "I am a Communist because I have seen France defeated and occupied by Germans, due to our idiotic pre-war policy of expecting you in England to do our dirty work for us, and therefore following at your heels. I see no reason why we French should ever give in to the Germans, or to you Anglo-Saxons, again. Thank Heaven you are getting out of Europe yourselves now! That will force the Americans out. And soon we true Frenchmen, who have always understood Russia (Czarist or Communist) will be able to solve all the continent's problems by a reasonable division of spheres of interest, trade, and defence."

Journalist, aged 55, Collaborator, reprieved from Death-sentence: "We collaborators were not so wrong. We made mistakes. But we always thought your British people would never stay in Continental Europe; and we always believed the Germans were our natural allies against Communism. Now our policies are vindicated, and are carried out by compatriots who wanted to shoot us! Churchill was right: only a French-German alliance can save Europe, and now we have a chance to do it without supervision by the British and Americans."

Norman Farmer: "I am sorry we cannot walk in step with you in Britain. Ever since the war ended we thought we could, but it has become increasingly clear that your people preferred the British Empire to a united Europe—even to a Europe united with America. Personally, knowing something of the meaninglessness of political labels, I don't think it's really fair to blame your Socialists. I don't think the British people (*le peuple anglais*) feel any kinship or common interest with any of us on the Continent. At least, we preferred your soldiers to all others, yet they seemed to us to have less in common with us in Normandy than the Americans or Canadians did. I think it's still due to that devil of an English Channel. It's your Maginot Line, and it hypnotizes you the way that line hypnotized our generals."

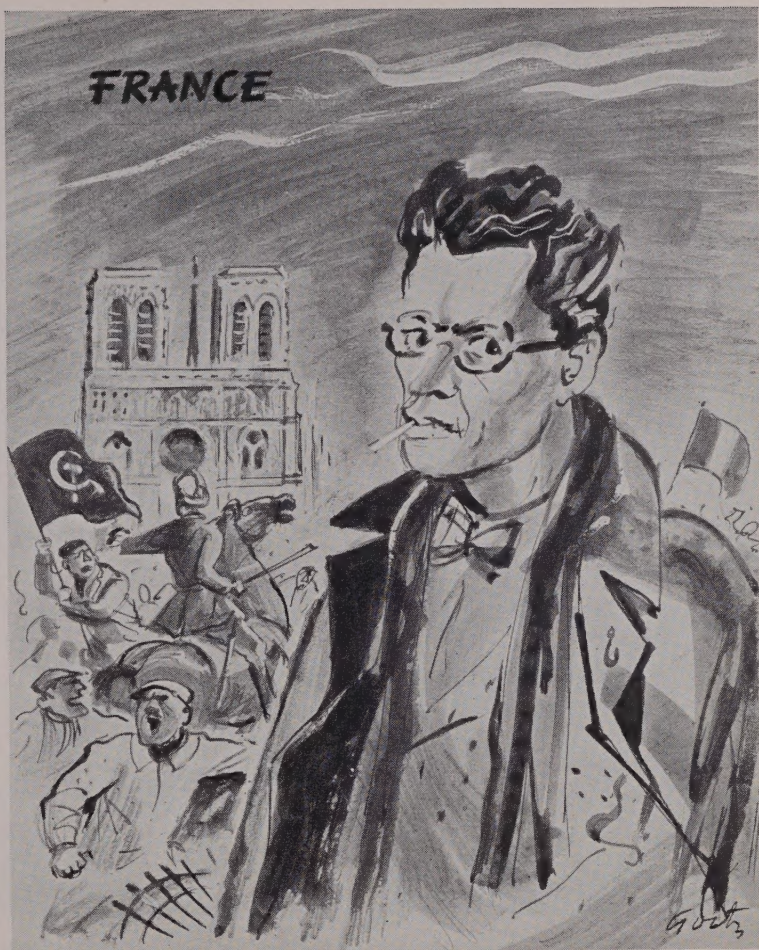
Girl Student of 18 at the Sorbonne: "I think your people and their government have been no more crazy than ours since the war. They talk a lot here about Jean Monnet and his famous 1946 plan for France, but we haven't worked it out by half yet, though it was due for completion in 1951. Why any Englishman should expect another Monnet Plan—this time for all Western Europe's iron and steel—to be acceptable and practicable, as it stands on paper, I don't know. I don't see any French people being willing to wind up

French iron and steel plants to please foreigners. No Americans would, either. Why should you British, then? I think our civilization's going down and out. Nobody trusts anybody. And in Russia they're just the same. I feel instinctively you British are probably being very far-sighted—but I don't see how you can resign from humanity!"

HOLLAND

The Dutch were the most bitter.

An International Lawyer, aged 52: "For me, you British have merely been hypocritical—not perfidious—since the war. You're too decent to betray your neighbours: look how ashamed you were (and the French weren't) over Munich. But, instead, you preach one lot of principles and act on an opposite lot, just as you always have done in history. (We Dutch have every reason to know that, since your pious Cromwell was the biggest hypocrite and double-crosser of all!) You pocket American aid—the British lion's share—and then gum-up the works of closer European economic integration! Your Socialists inflate the pound, get 'full employment' better than any Conservative businessmen have ever done, then try to insulate the British economy more than any Conservatives ever tried to do with tariffs, and to prevent foreigners dealing in the inflated pounds at their true worth! You sided with UNO and the Americans against the Dutch over the Netherlands East Indies trouble, when you could afford to do so at our expense; but you jolly soon sided with South Africa about South-West Africa, or 'abstained'; and you served notice on UNO that *you* weren't going to put *your* colonies under international control and supervision; and you declared *your* Malayan troubles were 'private' to yourselves, and not a matter for UNO's investigation. You are no worse than others. But you are certainly no better; yet your Foreign Office and Labour Party, your people and your press—all of you as a nation—see yourselves as crusaders. About the only crusaders *I* can think



of on a par with you were those who went to save Christian countries from the Turks, but plundered them first before even the Turk could do so! I only trust your auto-hypnosis won't lead you to perdition. At any rate, I'm sure we Continentals will make quicker and sounder progress without you, at first. We shall want you, later. That will be the testing-time for all of us; not now."

Export-Import Merchant, aged 65: "If Holland were rich enough and big enough, she'd copy you and tell the French to go and take a walk. The tragedy is that you in Britain—as always—fail to see that every smaller Continental nation would automatically follow your lead rather than that of Germany, France or Italy, the other big nations. If you back out, you leave us no alternative in these days but to link our destinies with theirs."

Mother of Seven, two Sons lost in the War: "The shame is that everyone I know, in five Continental countries, thought the world of you British in 1945. They don't now. What has



happened to you? What's made you seem so mean-spirited and short-sighted? We trusted your leadership; not America's; and certainly not that of France. But what alternative have we, and the Scandinavians, once you let Germans and French put their heads together without supervision by you?"

* * * * *

These comments tell their own story: one that can constantly be retraced in its telling through the past four or five hundred years. It is that of many smaller nations looking to Britain for a lead against big evils, tyrants, or "giants in the way". It was so in the time of Elizabeth, Cromwell, William III and Anne, and so on through Georgian and Victorian times. From Roman times, throughout the darkest of the so-called Dark Ages of Britain and Europe, into the light of modern times, the chief formative contacts and influences for Britain have been European; and the true interests of the British people have coincided with those of the majority of the smaller

States of Europe. The British have seldom failed to respond to this Continental demand for leadership. At least, try as they might to turn a deaf ear—as in the Thirty Years' War, or under Charles II, or in the bad Prussian days of 1860-75, or in 1938—they have soon, very soon, had to revise their policy, often at heavy cost.

It is too soon yet to say whether British policy towards closer European integration since 1945 has in fact been "wrong"—or, indeed, "right". But it is significant that most of our Continental neighbours, and all Americans, seem to think it has been "neither hot nor cold", that it has "damned with faint praise", and—most ominous!—that it has merely ("merely"!) represented a return to the Victorian, un-traditional, British policy of splendid isolation and "ourselves first". In short, we British today seem to be more damned on the Continent for our sins of omission than for those of commission.

Let a Dane's simple judgment sum it up. He said, "It's *your* leadership we want!"

Food From Marginal Land

by GEORGE MARTELLI

In our April number Professor Stamp drew attention to the alarming rate at which good farmland needed to produce food is being used up for other purposes. Mr Martelli, himself a farmer, here examines some possible ways of redressing the balance and gives a striking example of what can be done. The public enquiry resulting from Lord Iveagh's opposition to the compulsory purchase of 600 acres of his farmland by the Forestry Commission is to be held on October 30 at Thetford

In his Presidential address to the Geography Section of the British Association last year, Professor Stamp started by reminding his audience that "any country has but two ultimate assets—its land and its people". All of us who accept that statement will have followed with gratitude and admiration his gallant defence of Britain's farmland against its numerous and insatiable assailants.

We must, however, face the fact that the Professor is fighting an uphill battle and that the process he is opposing will not easily be stopped, although it can be slowed down and perhaps a new front may eventually be stabilized, provided that all those who believe the cause is right play their full part in the resistance movement.

Meanwhile the need to grow more food in Britain remains urgent and is likely to continue so, in spite of the fact that at the moment the farmers of Western Europe and America seem to be more concerned with surpluses than deficiencies (*vide* the recent Conference of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers). But that is a consequence of world under-distribution rather than world over-production, and except on a very short-term view the opinion of the Lord Boyd-Orr school of thought, that we are moving towards rather than away from world starvation, is undoubtedly more realistic.

In any case our own problem here in Britain is not affected, since we cannot afford to buy all the food abroad that we used to, whether it is there or not. Hence the need to grow more of it at home.

This can be done either by increasing the output of our existing farmland, or by enlarging the farmland. In fact both are necessary. We need to increase the average yield per acre—i.e. of corn, milk, meat, etc.—and also to bring more acres into use. At present we are losing land every year and a big effort is wanted even to keep level, let alone win back what has been lost.

It is often assumed that these acres lost to agriculture—amounting to nearly 4,000,000

in the last sixty years—have all been taken for urban development. In fact that is far from being the case. Between 1891, when the total cultivated area of arable crops was the largest ever recorded, and 1946, when it touched an all-time low, about 1,000,000 acres were taken over for building, roads, etc., while 2,750,000 acres simply reverted to 'rough grazings', in other words became derelict or semi-derelict land. And this was in England and Wales alone.

It is true that among the 1,000,000 acres taken away from the farmers was some of the best land in England, such as no nation in its senses would have allowed to be so misused, whereas the 2,750,000 acres mostly consisted of the worst. The fact remains that we cannot put all the blame on 'development'. It is only responsible for about a quarter of the loss. The rest is the result of allowing land simply to go out of cultivation and relapse into its natural state, because to farm it in the prevailing conditions did not pay.

The decline in British farming began long before the end of the last century and in spite of the temporary fillip given in two wars, on the whole it has continued ever since. The process started in the seventies following the repeal of the Corn Laws and the importation of cheap American grain, which brought our own agriculture to the verge of bankruptcy. Only in the last decade has the process been checked and it still remains to be seen whether it can be reversed.

This decline, moreover, has occurred both in quantity and quality. Not only has the area of farmland diminished, but the way in which it is farmed has deteriorated. This is indicated in the steady fall of the arable area (which only once in this century, from 1944-46, has reached the peak attained in 1869) and the corresponding increase of permanent pasture, the former representing intensive or 'high' farming, and the latter bad husbandry, starved land, and poverty-stricken farmers.

In times of prosperity, which he has been taught by experience to expect only when his

country is at war, the British farmer ploughs up his grassland and grows the richest crops of grain produced anywhere in the world. Comes peace and the inevitable slump, he sells his implements, puts down his land to grass, and prepares to exist at a subsistence level by grazing beasts on permanent pasture.

In course of time, through lack of the means to maintain it, this pasture becomes poorer and poorer, until eventually it can only be classed as rough grazings, and even this is often a euphemism for waste land. This is the explanation, reduced to its simplest terms, of the 2,750,000 acres of farmland that have become derelict since 1891. It should hardly be necessary, but probably is, to add that the farmer himself is not primarily to blame, since it was successive Parliaments, dominated by the urban vote, that decided to let agriculture go hang, thus depriving him of the incentive to keep his land in heart.

Now there is surely a connection between these 2,750,000 acres which were once cultivated and no longer are, and the 3,000,000 acres of 'marginal' land which the Minister of Agriculture has estimated could be brought into use. The two figures are sufficiently close to suggest that a very large proportion of this marginal land is simply former farmland that for economic reasons has been allowed to become derelict. In other words we do not need to clear the forests, level the mountain-tops or push back the sea in order to obtain the additional land. All we have to do, with the help of our vastly superior knowledge and equipment, is no more than what our grandfathers and great-grandfathers succeeded in doing, on the same soil, without fuss, and without the aids of modern science or machinery.

Nor do we need to think only of the Welsh hills or the Scottish highlands. If the definition of marginal land is land that, for one reason or another, is not at present cultivated, but which could be brought under cultivation at reasonable cost, it can be found throughout the length and breadth of Britain. Every county has its quota, and every parish too. In Suffolk alone, according to a recent estimate of the National Farmers Union, there are nearly half a million acres of such land, a lot of it in quite small parcels.

Most of it, however, is to be found in certain well-defined regions, where the land being naturally poor or relatively inaccessible was the first to be abandoned when the hard times came and has remained abandoned ever since. Such are the moorlands of Northern England, the foothills of Wales and the Border, and the sandy soils of East

Anglia. And of course there are smaller pockets distributed throughout the country.

What can be done to bring more of this land into use? A lot of it could be farmed economically at present prices, and only the initial expense of reclaiming it prevents this happening. Will the Government assist by providing part of the capital? One difficulty is that the amount and kind of assistance required vary enormously with the circumstances. In some cases even a slightly better price for the product, or a reduction in the price of fertilizers or feeding-stuffs, would be sufficient encouragement to the farmer to go ahead on his own. In others a considerable capital outlay would be necessary, e.g. on buildings, drainage, fencing, water supply, etc., which the farmer normally could not provide himself.

In Eire, under the land improvement plan introduced a year ago, the state is preparing to spend £40,000,000 on rehabilitating 4,000,000 acres by drainage, liming, and fertilizers, with the ultimate aim of doubling the Republic's output of food and increasing its exports thereof fivefold. The Government pays two thirds of the cost and the farmer one third. In the present circumstances, to increase its independence of overseas food supplies would seem to be at least as important to Britain as it is important to Eire to increase its foreign trade.

It would, however, be a pity to give the impression that everything depends upon Government action. Quite a lot has been done already without any special measures. The very fact that in the last ten years the net loss of agricultural land has appreciably slowed down in spite of the many encroachments made upon it during and since the war, shows that a considerable acreage must have been reclaimed in the same period. Otherwise the demands for aerodromes, training grounds, housing estates and mining sites would have reduced the total cultivated area to a much smaller size than it is today.

Some of this reclamation was carried out by County Agricultural Executive Committees, who took over large stretches of waste land during the war and farmed them on behalf of the Ministry. In most cases this same land is now being farmed privately, and probably very profitably, since the initial expense, always heavy when breaking fresh ground, was borne by the taxpayer.

In other cases the work has been done by individual farmers, sometimes with the help of the A.E.C.s, but often with their own unaided efforts. Many of them are 'small' men without financial reserves, but possessing the



Derelict land on the Elveden Estate which Lord Iveagh is reclaiming at the rate of 500 acres a year. The posts are for the rabbit fence which is erected as soon as the land is ploughed, forcing any rabbits left inside to starve. There are over twenty miles of fencing on the estate, since the elimination of rabbits is an essential part of reclamation in Breckland. For several centuries warrening was the chief industry until the wholesale importation of Australian rabbit-meat made it unprofitable

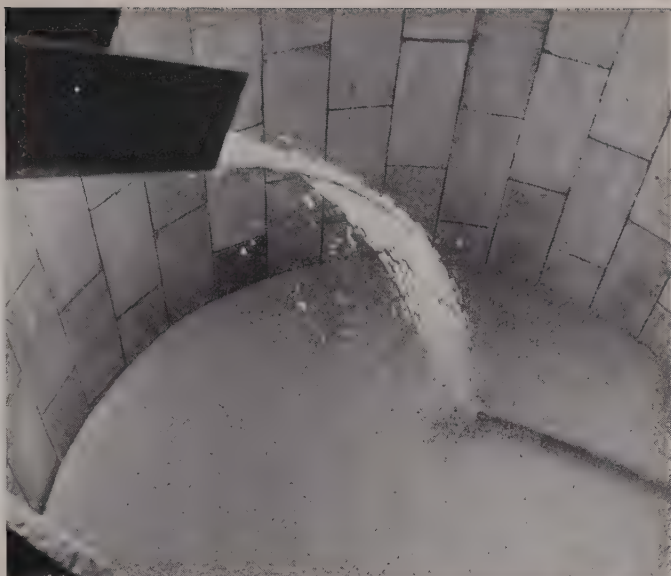
Ploughing up heathland on the estate, in a characteristic Breckland landscape, with pine trees forming a shelter-belt on the skyline. Reclaiming such land is a tough job owing to the wire-like properties of the heather which takes time to rot down; but it is being effectively dealt with by the 'caterpillar' type of tractor and powerful plough, seen here burying it under nine inches of soil. After further cultivation this stretch will be heavily limed and manured and then sown with oats or barley





(Above) Harvesting in the first year after reclamation on the Elveden Estate. Two combine-harvesters are at work, cutting and threshing the corn in one operation. When the large tank-like containers on these machines are full, the grain is discharged through the long spout into waiting lorries or trailers. It is then carried to the drying-plant and grain store. (Left) A heavy crop of barley under-sown with lucerne, grown on land which a year before was a desert of bracken and scrub

(Right) Grain being discharged into a silo after being dried. Three grain stores and drying-plants are now needed to deal with the crops from land which for generations has been considered worthless from the point of view of food-production. (Below) A general view of one of the stores, showing some of the twelve silos it contains, each with a capacity of thirty tons. Facilities for adequate storage make it possible to keep the grain on the farm until the summer months, thus taking advantage of the better prices obtainable



energy and enthusiasm which are even more important. It has been a question of ten acres of coppice cleared here, and another ten rescued from the marshes there—drops in the ocean, maybe, but also straws in the wind.

There are other examples on a much larger scale and it is with one of them that this article is particularly concerned. It has been chosen not only to show what can be done on one type of marginal land, but also because it illustrates both the process which brought farming in Britain to such a low level and the method by which it may rise again.

The Suffolk Breckland near the Norfolk border, on which the Elveden Estate is situated, is one of the most barren regions of England, with the lowest rainfall and the sparsest population in the kingdom. Vast tracts of desolate heath, varied only by the pine-belts grown as wind-breaks, alternate with the equally vast tracts of woodland planted by the Forestry Commission. Over most of it the soil consists of blowing sand above chalk or gravel on which nothing grows except scrub, bracken and heather, and which was likened by the diarist Evelyn, who toured the region in 1677, to the "travelling sands of Lybia deserts".

It was here, in the year 1801, that the fourth Earl of Albemarle, who had inherited the Elveden Estate from his uncle, Admiral Keppel, decided to take the farming in hand himself. Like other great landowners, he was encouraged to do so by the high price of corn—needless to say there was a war going on at the time—and by the example of others, such as Coke of Norfolk, who was a close friend.

Albemarle ploughed up 4000 acres, marled the land with clay, manured it, sowed his seed with the new drilling-machine, and grew

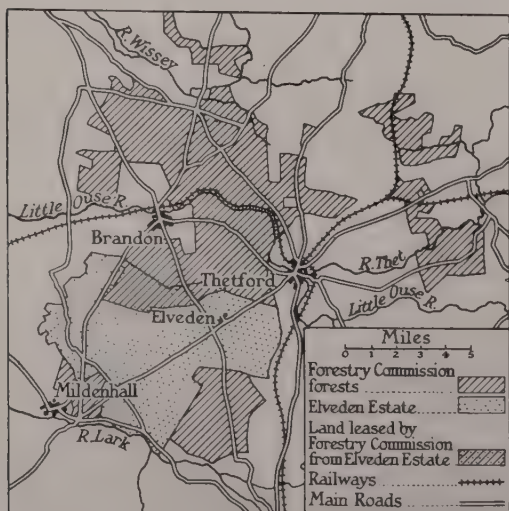
a five-course rotation of corn, turnips and clover. He also bought the best breed of sheep and grew sainfoin and lucerne to provide grazing and hay for the stock. In short he did everything that was to be expected of a rich and enlightened agriculturist of the period, thereby earning the approval of Arthur Young who described him as "a very active and experimental farmer, who will, by improving and planting, change the face of the desert that surrounds him".

Albemarle sold the estate in 1814—feeling possibly that the peace could bring no good to farmers—and thereafter over a century passed before another occupant succeeded who possessed an equal enthusiasm. In the meantime Elveden had reverted, if not quite to the status of a desert, to that of a purely sporting estate, famous for its pheasants and its house-parties, but not for the weight of its crops. In fact for over half a century, from the purchase of the estate by the Maharajah Duleep Singh in 1862 until the present Lord Iveagh succeeded to it in 1927, the land was considered so poor and farming it so unprofitable that it was only kept under cultivation for the sake of the game, and it was the head gamekeeper who largely decided what crops should be grown.

The farmland consisted of poor arable and worse pasture surrounded by heath and overrun by rabbits. Tradition had it that much of the heath had been cultivated in earlier times, and this may well be, for so rapid is the deterioration when land of this type is left to the mercy of nature that in a couple of years almost all traces of man's presence disappear and it is barely possible to recognize it as former farmland. Lord Iveagh himself believes that most of the land he has reclaimed was under the plough at one period or another, and dislikes the word "reclamation", holding that he is merely restoring the *status quo ante*.

At the time when he came into possession the prices obtained for farm produce were so discouraging—remember the milk that farmers poured down their drains—as to daunt even the enthusiast, however brave and however wealthy. What was the point in producing food that nobody would pay for? Lord Iveagh, however, believed that it would be wanted sooner or later, and in 1931, stimulated by the financial crisis, he seriously set about laying the foundations which made it possible when, thanks to Hitler, the opportunity did at last come, to grasp it with both hands.

The story of Elveden in the last ten years is the story of a transformation as complete as



A. J. Thornton



Young Guernsey cattle wintering in an improvised yard constructed by estate workmen using timber cut from the pinewood in the background. The roof and partitions are made from bales of straw

that effected by the Earl of Albemarle 150 years ago, but on a much greater scale. And just as his predecessor's achievement was an epitome of one agricultural revolution, so Lord Iveagh's may be seen as the microcosm of another. In both cases the introduction of a new system of farming, which could not have been justified but for an emergency which made agriculture a priority, resulted in the production of vast quantities of food on land that was previously considered practically useless. It was indeed because it was so considered that the Forestry Commission at the end of the First World War chose the Thetford area as the site of their largest plantation.

To describe how this transformation was carried out, how the arable acreage was doubled and 1500 acres won back from the wilderness, how the average yield of crops was more than doubled, and the total production multiplied many times, would need a book. Merely to say that it has been done by applying the well-known principles which have always governed the best kind of mixed farming would seem scarcely to do justice to the achievement, and yet that in essence is what it comes down to. First to build up and then

maintain fertility has always been the primary object, and it has been attained by the proven methods of heavy stocking and ley farming.

The turning-point was the discovery that lucerne would thrive at Elveden even in the severest drought, and that no other grass or clover would thrive as well, or do so much, when ploughed in at the end of five years, to enhance the fertility of the soil. It was this that made it possible to carry a greatly increased head of cattle (now producing over a quarter of a million gallons of milk yearly), and to evolve a new rotation enabling vast acreages of valuable crops to be grown year after year without exhausting the land.

When the success of the experiment first became apparent, people were inclined to say of Elveden that it was all right for Lord Iveagh but not for the ordinary farmer. People said the same of Thomas Coke at the beginning of the last century, but when the Norfolk farmers proceeded to follow his example they enjoyed a level of prosperity previously undreamed of. It is of course true that only a rich man could have afforded to take the risk, but that applies to almost all



Ewes with their lambs feeding off kale. Formerly large flocks of sheep eked out an existence on the heath; they have now been largely supplanted on the Elveden Estate by dairy and beef cattle

pioneers. The value of such work to the community is that it opens up new possibilities which benefit others beside the pioneer. There seems no reason, for example, why the methods used at Elveden, which were only discovered after a long period by expensive trial and error, should not be an economic proposition on other marginal land of similar type, of which there must be many thousands of acres now lying idle.

There will, however, be little encouragement to extend our farmland, if the only result of bringing new land into cultivation is to expose it to the acquisitiveness of some other land-user. Nobody is going to the trouble of draining a swamp, or ploughing up the side of a mountain, if the end of it all is to be an order for compulsory purchase. This is what is now threatening at Elveden, and it is to defend a principle, namely, that land producing food should not be taken for other purposes for which land not producing food is available, rather than to prevent the loss of some of his property, that Lord Iveagh is opposing the attempt of the Forestry Commission to acquire part of the farmland for tree-planting.

Whether it is more in the national interest

that a particular plot of ground should be used to grow food that is badly needed today, or that it should be planted with trees that will produce timber in thirty years' time, is a question on which people may have different opinions. What does seem clear is that it should not be decided by means of a verbal tug-of-war between two Ministries, or between some individual and a government department, or that there should be no appeal from the decision.

If the Government really want to see that other 3,000,000 acres producing food, the first thing they ought to do is to set up some competent authority—at present there is none short of the Cabinet—whose task would be to decide what is the proper use of land, and whose decisions would inspire the confidence of farmers.

For the tiller of the soil confidence in the future is all. Since the war British agriculture has received more than one shock and it has long memories of others. It is not so much subsidies that the farmer asks for, as the reassurance that the nation wants him to produce food, and will want him to go on doing so. If he felt more certain of the answer, we should see more Elvedens in this country.

Birds and Men

by E. M. NICHOLSON

The author, who is Chairman of the British Trust for Ornithology and a member of the Nature Conservancy, here returns to the subject on which he wrote his first book, Birds in England, twenty-five years ago. The colour-plates accompanying his article are reproduced by permission of Adprint and the Editors of the New Naturalist Series, published by Collins, in which they will appear this winter as illustrations to a volume by Mr Nicholson, also entitled Birds and Men

OBSESSED with our present dominance over nature, it is hard for us to realize how very recent in evolutionary terms that dominance is. Comparatively few centuries ago men were too insignificant both in numbers and in powers to exert any great influence over the populations or habits of birds. Even in such an old-inhabited country as Britain it is probably only during the past fifty centuries that the human population has exceeded about 4000 persons, and not much more than a hundred and forty generations of countrymen (or 4300 generations of skylarks) separate our tractor-powered agriculture from the first handful of farmers scratching the soil with deer's antlers. The earliest settlement which might be called a town, probably Wheathampstead in Hertfordshire, goes back only about 2000 years, and it was long after that before the growth of towns and of farming spread sufficiently to affect bird life in a big way.

The old idea that the impact of men on birds is mainly a matter of exterminating the interesting species and of generally reducing the bird population does not stand up to critical examination. Far from being unchanging and vulnerable creatures, most species of birds show increasingly clear evidence of being highly adaptable in their habits, habitats and distribution, and of having already begun to exploit successfully the changes caused by modern civilization. Certain highly specialized forms and others which are the object of intense direct persecution undoubtedly go under, and the early effects of the Industrial Revolution were exceptionally unfortunate, but on a broad and long-term view the effects of civilization are by no means unfavourable to bird life.

There is now reason to think that, at least over large areas of North-West Europe, the total bird population has been increased considerably by the activities of men, and it is even possible that the variety of species in many places has also been improved by the creation and maintenance of so many dif-

ferent habitats side by side. The more people there are in a country and the more they alter its landscape, the more rapidly and drastically the birds must change also. In this period of growing instability we are beginning to trace the appearance and spread of a wide range of adaptations and new habits evoked directly or indirectly by civilization.

Some of these adaptations have long been familiar. When we dig the earth, former forest species such as the robin come out and snap up the exposed insects and other food, following or even sitting on our spades. Similarly rooks and black-headed gulls have long had the habit of following the plough.

When we build, more and more species begin to nest, roost, rest or sing on our buildings, while other birds specially favour buildings which we have permitted by decay (or compelled by bombing or shelling) to take the form of ruins.

When we go fishing, birds which are not themselves expert at it follow our fishing fleets or wait around their harbours and pick up far more food than they could ever find unaided.

When we grow fruits and berries, birds gather to take their share, and sometimes more.

Even our neglects and blunders may help birds as much as what we do on purpose. Goldfinches, for instance, multiply wherever the soil is broken and then left to be colonized by thistles. The more goldfinches you meet on a farm the worse the land or the worse the farmer or both.

The more drastically we alter our landscape the more immediate competitive advantage we give to those birds which can most quickly adapt themselves to these types of change. It seemed not long ago that a few species such as the house-sparrow and starling had outstanding powers of adapting themselves in this way, and that most other species were incapable of it. This gloomy supposition is fortunately proving wrong. It

now appears that, while certain species have achieved spectacular expansion through being able to take advantage of civilization exceptionally quickly, many other species can also adapt themselves quite successfully, given a little more time. This evidence of wider adaptability is doubly welcome because it enables more species to live successfully close to us and because it gives hope of reversing the trend towards excessive dominance by a very few extremely abundant species and of making for a more diversified bird population. Certain dominant species such as the house-sparrow and the thrush (or song-thrush) appear to be a good deal less abundant than they were earlier this century, while increases are discernible not only in some other very common species but in less abundant forms such as the goldfinch, mistlethrush, oystercatcher and great crested grebe.

Some illustrations will show how many forms this adaptability can take. It may mean colonization of fresh habitats. Black redstarts, which within living memory were characteristic of southern British sea-cliffs in autumn and winter, now breed in several English towns, both coastal and inland. Jays, which were among our shyest woodland birds, have since 1940 begun breeding in the central London parks and can even be watched at close quarters searching litter-baskets for food. Goldfinches also, lured back by wartime thistlebeds round anti-aircraft sites, have resumed breeding in central London for the first time since the buildings stretched out beyond it a century ago.

The vast increase and spread of fulmars has coincided with and is probably due to the growth of commercial fishing, and most of the gulls also probably owe their increase largely to the much-improved supply of easily accessible food provided by the fishing and shipping industries. Even great blackbacks now winter on the Thames in London, where they were almost unknown until some twenty years ago, in imposing numbers—last January there were well over 200. Lesser blackbacks have also begun within the same period to halt in hundreds on the tidal Thames for some weeks on autumn passage. In winter also mew (or common) gulls are becoming a familiar sight far inland on the South Downs, Cotswolds and elsewhere.

An entirely new breeding species, the little ringed plover, has during the past few years become a regular summer migrant to gravel-pits and similar areas near London and elsewhere, and it may almost be said to follow

in the wake of the bulldozer and the grab as the black-headed gull follows the plough. Several other species of the utmost rarity, such as the black-winged stilt and moustached warbler, have bred for the first time on record at quite recently created artificial habitats such as sewage farms and reservoirs. Such records, while still sporadic, have become too frequent during the past decade to be regarded as entirely accidental; they evidently represent an effort to respond to the provision of new types of habitat.

To switch to quite a different field, pied flycatchers have been enabled by provision of nesting boxes not only to increase their numbers but to spread their breeding range over new areas such as the Forest of Dean.

Not all adaptations lead to such conspicuous changes in numbers or distribution, and some of the most striking new habits have arisen among already widespread and abundant species. Perhaps the strangest and best documented is the opening of milk-bottles by tits. The milk-bottle with a removable cap has only come into use well within living memory, yet already large numbers of blue and great tits, and some other birds have developed in various parts of the British Isles systematic and regular habits of opening these bottles and drinking the milk. This habit, first recorded from near Southampton in 1921, seems to have originated independently in several different centres from which it has spread considerably. It has not, however, yet appeared in other countries where milk is delivered in bottles, such as Holland, although Dutch ornithologists after reading of the British experience are anxiously watching for any sign of it. This habit of opening milk-bottles although so surprising, at least appears to be a straightforward food-getting operation, but the paper-tearing practice which suddenly developed on a large scale in 1949 has no obvious explanation. An inquiry assisted by the British Trust for Ornithology has brought to light examples from every county in England, most of those in Wales and six in Scotland, the blue tit being much the commonest perpetrator, with a few examples by great tits. The paper-tearing season apparently opens at the end of July, working up to a peak in late October and the first half of November, and ceasing before Christmas. Milk-bottle opening, although commonest in winter, occurs all the year round. While milk-bottle opening is a serious local nuisance (and sometimes defeats even such precautions as covering the bottles with flat stones) the destruction of



A forest bird by origin, the blue tit soon made itself at home in our gardens and learned to feed acrobatically on dangling coconuts and bacon-rinds. Few birds are readier to breed in nesting-boxes and similar crevices provided by human beings. Now it has become a skilful looter of milk-bottles and, invading the insides of our houses, has begun to tear strips off magazines, lampshades and even wallpaper. The question is, what will blue tits start to attack next?



Goldfinches were greatly reduced through the 19th-century passion for catching cagebirds wholesale and probably also by the tidying-up of land owing to the Agricultural Revolution. Wild Birds Protection Acts, agricultural depression, the increase of gardens and orchards and two destructive wars have all of them helped towards the remarkable revival of the gay, musical and sprightly goldfinches, bringing them back, as a breeding species, even into the London parks

A wren will nest, as here, in a cabbage-stalk or in a wall, an out-house or anywhere else handy and will find hidden insects in greenhouses, among creepers on buildings, in heaps of wood or haystacks, in hedges and shrubs as well as in all kinds of wild places. Yet so little do we know of this close neighbour that it has only lately been discovered that it is habitually polygamous and that we only hear part of its song; the rest is pitched too high for human ears





The robin is a short-lived and aggressive bird, which in Britain has largely given up its forest habitat and become a very tame neighbour, although it usually hides its nest from us with the utmost skill and care. It needs a large and ready supply of insect food throughout the year, which makes it appreciate man's habit of turning over the soil so often in farms and gardens. Many birds thrive on civilization; few so openly as the robin

magazines, lampshades, cartons, wallpaper and other material inside inhabited houses is potentially a much more serious type of persecution of men by birds, which it is to be hoped will not be widely imitated.

Another curious but fortunately harmless recent adaptation is the habit formed by starlings and some other birds of sitting on chimneys below which a fire is lit in order to "smoke-bathe" in the warm rising air.

To give a final example, of a different nature, motor traffic has led to many rabbits and other mammals being left dead on the roads after being run over and in Scotland (although not yet so far as I am aware in England) rooks have taken to scavenging these victims, beginning with their eyes, on quite a considerable scale—I have myself seen it in Berwickshire, Dumfriesshire and Aberdeenshire. This like other recent adaptations would repay further study.

So far in this article attention has been directed to the more striking and clearly identifiable cases of adaptation to be observed in Britain. These, however, are far from covering the whole range of adaptation of birds to human activities in this country. The wren is a good example of a species which shows comparatively few traces of

identifiable adaptation apart from often nesting in such places as walls and out-buildings, yet has become very markedly dependent upon our gardens, roadsides, hedgerows and other artificial habitats, and is thoroughly reconciled to our presence. It is in fact becoming much easier to count the species which are still in no way adapted to civilization.

As we extend our knowledge of bird ecology and of the nature of bird adaptations to civilization it is gradually becoming possible to forecast with some confidence some of the effects on bird life of certain types of development. To take a simple example, a plan for afforesting an additional 2,000,000 acres of Great Britain largely with conifers is equivalent to a plan for increasing the chaffinch population by some hundreds of thousands, and for greatly extending the area occupied by coal-tits. It may also be expected to result in a very considerable increase in the wood-pigeon population.

Nothing in British ornithology is more urgent than that we should obtain, and use, greater knowledge of the problems of birds among people. It is a highly interesting field of study, and those who turn to it will not be disappointed.



Kodachrome by Flt Lt H. M. H. Tudo

The last job done: mountains sighted 160 miles away. The author and Sgt Weston on their return

Antarctica: An Airman's View

by SQUADRON LEADER G. B. WALFORD

Articles in our November 1949 and July 1950 numbers described the background and voyage to Queen Maud Land of the Norwegian-British-Swedish Antarctic Expedition. Squadron Leader Walford commanded the Royal Air Force Antarctic Flight which was formed to assist in its establishment by air reconnaissance for a route through the pack-ice, search for a landing-place and reconnaissance of the area surrounding the base at Maudheim. These three tasks were all performed successfully

Nature is but a name for an effect,
Whose cause is God.

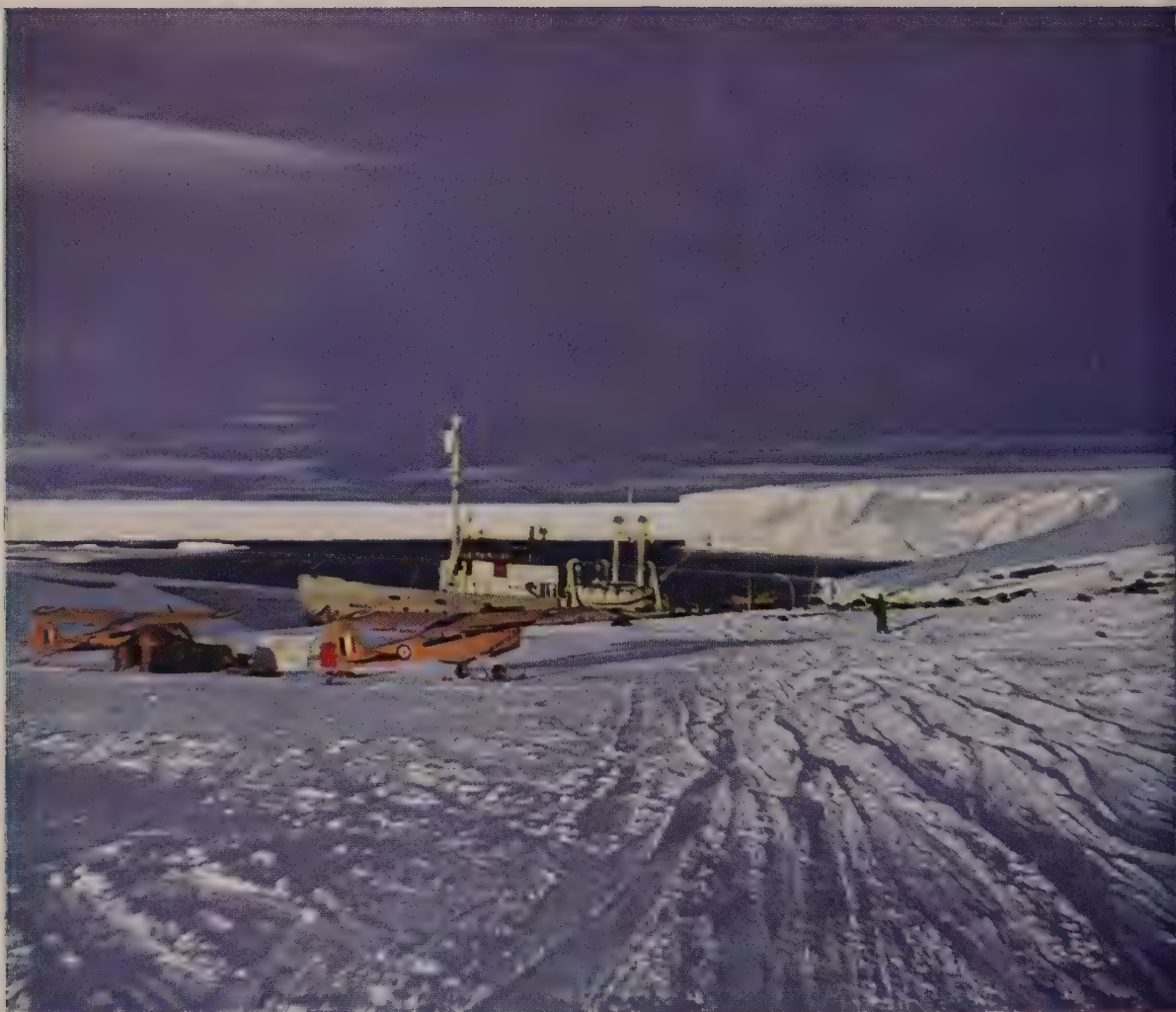
William Cowper

MUCH of the charm of the Antarctic lies in its remoteness. Still out of reach by air, the visitor must journey on the surface. Long passages across stormy and barren oceans are rare but have a special significance here for two reasons. First, they provide a link with the past when the great pioneer explorers travelled exclusively by that means; and second, because the slow translation of a highly civilized being from the clatter of the world he knows to the silence of the land of ice he does not know provokes a fascinating

spiritual migration. It is perhaps as though the Creator of the universe decided to leave one small portion of our earth perpetually enshrined in inaccessibility, wishing to deter the hasty and ill-prepared visitor lest he should emerge without a proper understanding of what it could reveal.

It would be hazardous therefore for me to attempt to reflect faithfully the impression the Antarctic made upon me unless I may take the reader with me during the long voyage south and invite him to follow the metamorphosis.

The twenty-eight days' passage from London to Cape Town was an unbroken chapter



Kodachromes by *Sgt-Ldr G. B. Walford*



(Above) The floating quay-side and airfield of Maudheim. The two Auster ski-planes are picketed down in the tranquillity of an Antarctic midsummer midnight. (Left) Aircraft being re-embarked before departure. One of the machines is shown here being transformed once again from a skiplane to a floatplane, while supported on a specially built cradle on Norsel's afterdeck

of sea and silence. No telephones, no files, no appointments. After a few days of rushing about as might a chicken after its head had been cut off, we quietened down, for time began to assume a new and refreshing meaning. Now that we were no longer compelled to work against it, its role changed from that of a tyrannical master to a convenience for navigation and for the spacing of regular events such as meals. We had, of course, plenty of work to do in connection with our aircraft and with plans for operating them down south, but the days left ample space at our disposal for more leisured pursuits. At home many of us often wish for 'time' to do this or that—watch birds or write plays: little ambitions that recede like mirages when stalked. But here in *Norsel* was 'time'—abundant and unfettered. The pace of living slackened and the whirring machinery of our nerves relaxed, as it were, to 'cruising revs'. I learnt to embark with relish and slow deliberation upon, for instance, the flute; and I was to find later on during the voyage periods of uncertainty bordering upon the critical when "the soft complaining flute"

stimulated and refreshed as might a cup of tea to a harassed civil servant.

When we reached Cape Town I had begun to suspect that time, unless properly mastered, will remorselessly pursue us to death, and prevent us from achieving anything worth while in the meantime; also that scientists and explorers, as men of wisdom, recognize this and that is why they live in a cocoon of purposeful indifference.

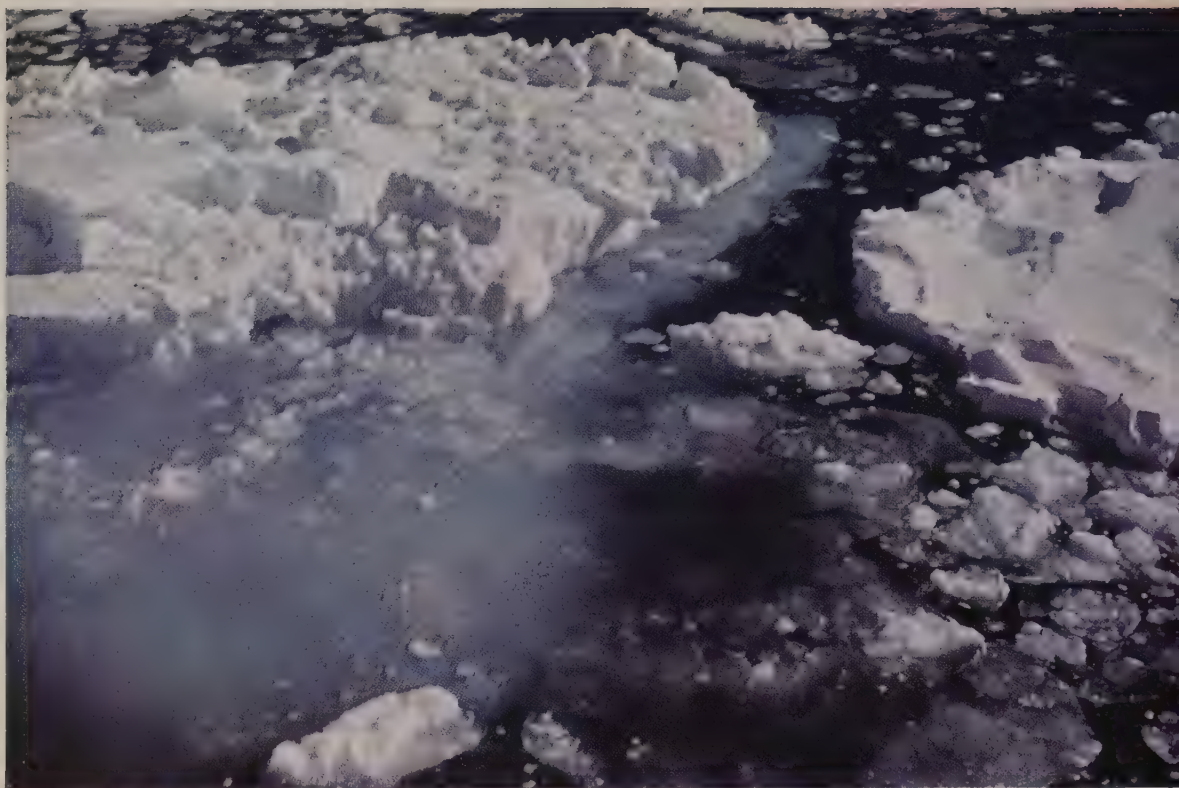
We spent a week of feverish activity on the quayside in Cape Town assembling one aircraft and re-stowing both in readiness for operations at short notice down south. Taking an exposed aircraft on the deck of a very small vessel through the Southern Ocean is not to be recommended, but we had no alternative.

A further six weeks of sea and ice lay between us and our first sight of Antarctica. "Tossed on the wind-ridden restless sea" of the roaring forties we fought our first engagement with nature and soon discovered how pitiful are the efforts of man when matched against her. The two aircraft, one in a crate, the other perched on top, were getting some

The Expedition provided the R.A.F. with its first opportunity for visiting Antarctica, thus carrying the R.A.F. ensign to its farthest point south. Assembled with their survival kit are (left to right): Sgt P. D. Weston, Sqn Ldr G. B. Walford, Cpl W. B. Gilbey, Cpl L. A. Quar and Flt Lt H. M. H. Tudor



Kodachrome by Gordon Robin



Kodachrome by Sqn Ldr G. B. Walford

Pack-ice seen from the deck of a ship is not always a white and lifeless monotone. Here the sun penetrates the clear water amongst it to reveal its great depth and the range of its rich colours

terrific punishment; we did what we could to safeguard them but did not feel entitled to expect to get them through all the way successfully. The cards were not in our hands. But soon there were no more storms, and confidence returned, discreetly, and in a new disguise.

I disagree with those who find one part of the ocean the same as any other—the pattern of the water and its behaviour may be so but we were now, in the solemn words of the *Antarctic Pilot*, “southwards of the usual route of shipping” and I found each day some new enchantment unveiled by its remoteness and power as an obstacle encircling the continent. The additions to the scene—albatrosses and later the icebergs—assisted one to recapture that atmosphere of awe and fear which must have beset the minds of the early voyagers as they approached what they earnestly believed to be the edge of the world.

The transfer of equipment from the whale factory-ship in the midst of the Southern Ocean was carried out with that facility and ease which seems to characterize the work of sailors and explorers, but for which there is no apparent justification either in plan or

circumstance. Our aircraft were still more or less intact and we saw that we had a reasonable chance of being able to produce air reconnaissance when it was needed; but before doing so we had to manhandle the aeroplane round from the athwartships position, where it had been stowed for maximum protection, to the fore-and-aft position where the ship's derrick could hook it up and lower it over the side. We had spent many hours with paper models and a tape measure calculating how this mathematically impossible task was to be performed, but as ‘summer tourists’ we had by this time learnt that when there is determination laced with skill and patience the word impracticable is ignominiously expelled from common usage. Hope was fairly general that with the whale factory-ship interlude behind we would be at our destination before very long. But this was not to be. Our first attempts to get through the pack were abortive and we spent a week rather like a fly floundering in a rice pudding, but this chapter advanced us further in our initiation as explorers.

In civilization we are nearly always involved with affairs and events over which

we have some control. There is transport and machinery permanently at hand to move, manufacture or destroy, at will. There is little that cannot be done. We had seen in the roaring forties that nature can make things extremely difficult; at sea we had action and did not feel completely impotent. But here in the pack we seemed to be held at arm's length and deprived of any means of helping ourselves. We, the neophytes, found this a bit hard and were inclined to misjudge the phlegmatism of the veterans as a too-ready acceptance of our uselessness. We were soon to learn that it was nothing of the sort and that an explorer would not last long if he failed to develop that quality. To my surprise and a little to my comfort, however, I came across an expression of great anxiety and impatience by Captain Scott in his journal of 1910 when *Terra Nova* was similarly held up. "The position is very cheerless", he wrote, "... we are surrounded by compacted floes of immense area . . . it is difficult to keep hope alive." He went on to say that "there could hardly be a more dreary prospect for the eye to rest upon". I could not find it dreary, for the week with us was largely cloudless, and all around us unbroken to the horizon lay this rough carpet of hummocked pack-ice, not, as might be imagined, a white and lifeless monotone but a field of ever-changing tone and colour and dotted with the most aristocratic and dignified of creatures—the penguin.

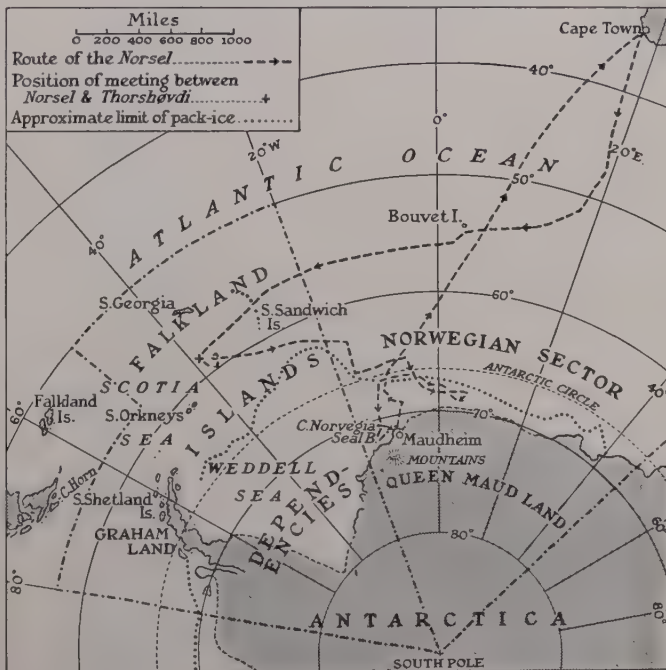
It was something new to find oneself in a situation of such complete insignificance and yet to be free of all sense of loneliness. The frustration of delay was soon subdued by the grandeur of our surroundings and it was almost as though our progress was deliberately being delayed so that we should have time for a re-assessment of our own importance, and for the cultivation of a special intellectual faculty with which to comprehend the unique magnificence of the Frozen South.

Flight Lieutenant Tudor and myself were most anxious to get into the air but the pack was so rough that take-off from it was out of the question with either skis or wheels; though as it proved impossible for the ship to penetrate farther south at this point, air reconnaissance

would have been of doubtful value anyway. The decision was taken to try and break out to the north and for the aircraft to reconnoitre a route through the pack farther west.

We had now to transpose our skiplane into a floatplane, an operation of some delicacy which we managed to accomplish in a few hours. The floatplane was new to us and we had to assemble it without the necessary technical instructions because they had failed to reach us before leaving Cape Town. We got it over the side onto the water with unexpected ease and I set off. To my delight and surprise the machine behaved perfectly, and I felt that it shared my enthusiasm for the air.

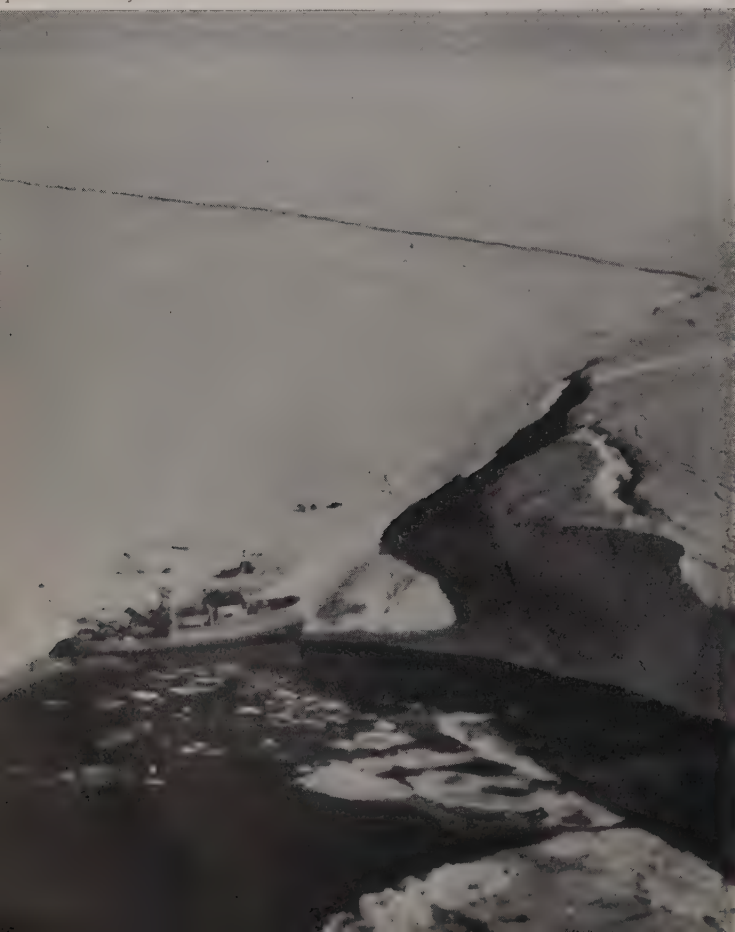
It might be expected that the first reaction to ascent over the Southern Ocean pack-ice would be a fear-inspired determination not to get lost. For after take-off a glance over the shoulder showed the minute *Norsel* receding to an indistinguishable speck amongst the mosaic camouflage of the ice. Fortunately we had equipped the aircraft with a radio compass which provided the pilot with a constant indication of the relative bearing of the ship; thus relieved from much anxiety I soon became absorbed in the scene that lay below me. To the south lay the patchwork quilt of ice, punctuated here and there with large tabular icebergs and to the north the ocean, with the sunlight playing upon the bergs that appeared like islands on its surface. Communication with the ship by radio-



A. J. Thornton

telephone was so good that all sense of isolation was absent. During this the first flight no 'lead' of open water appeared in the pack to the south and all I was able to do was to describe the nature and course of the edge. In the days that followed regular reconnaissances were flown which enabled the ship to penetrate to within a few miles of the barrier itself and on February 3 I flew off late one evening to reconnoitre Seal Bay where it was hoped to be able to make a landing. *Norsel* lay in a patch of open water under a thin canopy of cloud at 800 feet and soon disappeared behind me. As I climbed up to the south the edge of the barrier grew from a low grey streak on the horizon to an expanse of cream and gold, flat, immaculate and mocking my ability either to comprehend or describe. This, I thought, is surely the edge of the world. A vast white wilderness which mirrored the rich tones of the sun, low on the horizon to the west. So compelling was its charm that I felt a trespasser from another world and I recalled at once how those near death have told of an awareness of great peace and unfamiliar beauty; this I shared, and something more, for I knew that should I fall in this place I would lie entombed in

Sqn Ldr G. B. Walford



six million square miles of ice—the most exclusive sepulchre in the world.

Seal Bay I found to be an unbroken sheet of ice fast against the barrier; but a gap of open water, blue and calm, lay between the ice cliffs of Cape Norvegia and the pack. Descending to 100 feet I flew along the coast in a fruitless search for a landing-place for the ship. Immediately below my starboard wing and sometimes above it the precipitous ice cliffs maintained their regular height of just over 100 feet and were everywhere quite unscalable. But we were to experience many more disappointments before Tudor located amongst low overcast and snow-showers the ice quayside in Norsel Bay.

Neither of us had done any seaplane work before and we agreed that it was the most delightful and exhilarating form of aviation, especially down south. The difficulties were few and they only added to the satisfaction of the flight. Hoisting the seaplane outboard onto the water and back again was always a lively event. The word being given that a flight would take place, selected persons would stand by the derrick tackle and snubbing lines and the Captain would operate the winch—a great artist in all marine matters,

at this he excelled himself. Disappearing behind a pall of escaping steam he would control the hissing and clanking with uncanny precision, thus saving the aircraft from much damage. It was seldom possible out amongst the pack to find a stretch of water completely free of ice and once in the cockpit with the engine running the pilot would motor along turning this way and that as he steered between the lumps. The ice was normally on the move all the time and thus the open spaces frequently disappeared at the crucial moment. The best conditions were close to the barrier where we found either completely open water or packed ice.

The discovery of the unloading-point came both as a surprise and great relief as the season was well advanced and optimism was

The fissure which ran to the southwest from the unloading-point caused some anxiety. Groans of movement were heard emerging from the crack below the high cliff on the right-hand side



Sqn Ldr G. B. Walford

(Above) *Tongues of floating shelf-ice with precipitous cliffs meet the sea off Princess Martha Coast, where a narrow land of broken pack is kept constantly moving by a strong current.*

(Right) *The base named Maudheim. The particles of human habitation seemed to the author like "the first signs of cancer on a healthy body". The wintering-party are encamped on ice which is 500 feet thick, and is afloat in 800 feet of water*



beginning to wear a bit thin. The weather deteriorated during the unloading and as we worked hard to assemble the second aircraft and to change the other from floats to skis, we wondered whether conditions would improve sufficiently for us to fly before the time came for *Norsel* to leave. Again fortune favoured us and by the time the weather cleared three days later we had two skiplanes all ready for the air.

Our 'quayside' lay at the bottom of an incline in the shelf-ice, but about 500 yards inland the ice levelled out and was suitable for taking off and landing. The surface had the normal sastrugi irregularities—the higher portions being glazed ice from which the snow had been blown, and in between patches of deep and dry powdered snow. Taxying up and down the slope was not easy because of the difficulty of controlling a skiplane on the surface with no brakes, but taking off and landing proved delightfully straightforward. The undercarriage stood up very well to severe treatment from the rough surface.

My first continental flight began in overcast conditions, and once in the air looking inland there was no trace of a horizon: both ice and cloud merged into an indefinite greyness so that I found myself peering vertically downwards in an attempt to focus upon something to indicate my relationship with the surface. As the cloud began to break up light and shade entered the arena to play strange tricks. My eyes, which probed this way and that, were soon arrested by a line of hard and jagged teeth some ten miles to the south. We had hoped and expected that rock would be found nearby and I turned towards them for close examination. They did not get any clearer as I flew on and I could not make out exactly how far away they were. Soon they altered shape and I found that I was much nearer the surface than I thought as my altimeter reading had remained unchanged. Suddenly the jagged bits of 'rock' had vanished and I felt at once disappointed and rather stupid. Seeking some explanation for the illusion I lost height and presently made out a series of parallel lines etched onto the crest of the higher shelf-ice and formed as though a giant scalpel had been drawn across to split the surface, and that subsequently the ugly gashes had been treated with snow to form scars of a different texture from the flesh around. The 'rocks' had been the shadows cast by the irregularities in this heavily crevassed area.

The weather held until we left on February 20 and during that week we flew some forty

hours, sketching and photographing the area and taking each member of the wintering party up. On February 16 the long-range tank had been fitted to my aircraft and I set off with Sergeant Peter Weston to give him a look round. There was some scattered cloud and little wind as we made our way towards Seal Bay at 4000 feet. To the south nothing broke the sombre regularity of the limitless white desert before it merged into the cloudy distance but as I turned the aircraft towards home a faint smudge on the horizon winked at us from the south-west. Suspicious now of shadows I prepared to dismiss it as such but before doing so peered through the binoculars. Not shadow but substance. Excitedly we flew on towards it for an hour and presently made out a black rectangular rocky outcrop with further peaks behind pushing themselves up from beneath the tumbled surface of the ice-cap. We had reached the limits of discretion in a flight which was not planned, out of radio contact, and with no survival gear, so I set course for base delighted to have sighted some mountains and work for the geologists. Climbing to the north-east the visibility improved and once again I was impressed with the feeling that the Antarctic was entertaining her visitor and might here have said: "You have seen something of our mysteries and our moods, but you will never match this for beauty"—and with that swept all remaining cloud away to expose above and beneath the impeccable expanse of blue and white. But soon near the coast a tiny dot appeared like the first signs of cancer on a healthy body. Man had come to stay. I felt ashamed that we in the air had helped to make this intrusion possible and I think I understood for the first time in my life that it was in fact "the uttermost parts of the earth" untouched and unseen by man that were the purest both in spirit and form and thus the best and most vivid link between ourselves and our Creator. This impression was made even deeper as we sailed for Cape Town. Imprisoned in the new ice we fought very hard, using dynamite for our release; and this it seemed was a parting reminder of how microscopic is the material power of man but how limitless his freedom in the spirit, and that it was for this revelation that we had been gradually tutored during the long voyage south.

It is hard now not to be a little intolerant of those who ask why one goes to such a cold and remote place so far from the 'comforts' of civilization, and impossible not to be impatient with civilization itself because it prevents my returning.

The Egyptian Effendi

by LORD KINROSS

Lord Kinross passed seven years in Egypt, during and after the war, and has travelled widely in the Middle East. This experience lends weight to his estimate of a growing class which, by its success or failure in solving Egypt's social problems, may influence the whole international scene

SOCIAL, as distinct from political, revolutions happen gradually, and often imperceptibly. It is easy, and romantic, to imagine the Middle East as a land of simple tribesmen and peasants, ruled by turbaned Sheikhs of Araby and corpulent pashas, as a picturesque if somewhat unfortunate survival of mediaeval feudalism. A generation ago this picture was, substantially, a true one.

But today it is only half true, and in another generation it may cease to be true at all. For the Middle East is undergoing a social revolution, of which Europe, and the Middle East itself, are only beginning to be aware. It is the classic transference of power, familiar in modern Europe, from the aristocracy to the middle class. Unperceived as this transition may have been, it is the direct and logical product of Western influence, of a process by which East, meeting West, is now in effect *becoming* West.

The transition is by no means complete. Saudi-Arabia, for instance, remains an autocratic society. In countries like Iraq, Jordan and Syria the tribal chiefs of a nomadic civilization maintain their influence, side by side and sometimes in conflict with the Western urban elements. The rise of the middle class is farthest advanced in Egypt, a country of settled cultivation and growing industrialism, which may thus be regarded as the prototype of the Middle East revolution.

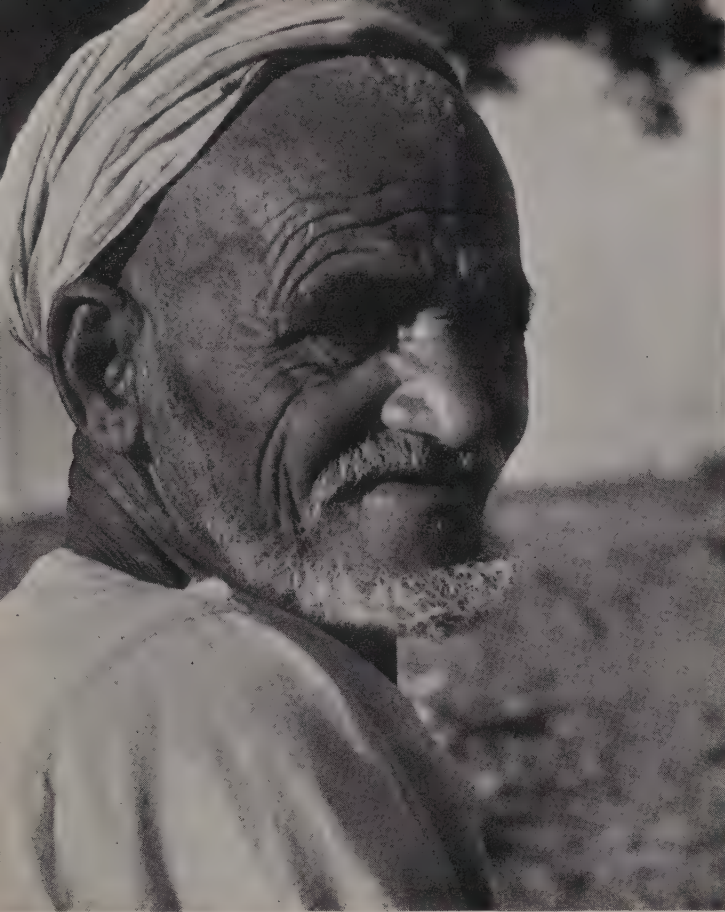
Egypt, until the First World War, was to all intents and purposes a feudal state, governed by a foreign administration of Turks and Britons. The land belonged to the Khedive, and was granted by him to pashas, predominantly of Turkish origin. This landowning class ruled Egypt on his behalf, in close cooperation with a British High Commissioner and British advisers. The joint regime set the country's affairs in order. The Assuan Dam brought perennial irrigation and reclaimed new lands. The pashas grew rich with the proceeds of triple crops and the rise in the price of cotton. The foreigners—British, French, Greeks, Jews and Levantines—grew rich through marketing it. Some of the new lands, and of the old Khedivial lands, were sold or granted to

Egyptians, developing a new class of Egyptian-born landowner. There was a general rise in the Egyptian standard of living and security. But for the most part the Egyptians as such remained labourers and small peasants, minor merchants and retailers, junior officials, playing little responsible part in the direction of their country's affairs.

The First World War brought fundamental changes. Turkey became an enemy and Egypt a British protectorate. The Turkish element in the ruling class diminished. Egyptian-born officials began to take the place of Turkish-born officials. Egypt began to industrialize, to meet the needs of the war, and some of the proceeds went into the pockets of Egyptians, creating a new commercial class to match the new class of landowners. Above all, Western education began to bear fruit. The purely religious education of the al-Azhar University and the Islamic schools had been gradually supplemented, and to some extent superseded, by secular schools. British, French and American education played its part, and a new Western, Egyptian generation, came into being.

Thus, by the end of the war, the germ of an Egyptian middle class considered itself ready to take over political power from the former Turkish ruling class and, as soon became evident, from the British. The Nationalist movement, which flared into action in 1919 and achieved the first steps towards Egypt's independence, was essentially a middle-class movement. It was inspired largely by men who had risen from among the *fellaheen* (peasants), whom the West had educated, and who now, ironically, wished to banish the West altogether. Its leader, Zaghloul Pasha, was a fellah, who had had a legal education, had become proficient in French, and had been made Director of Education by the British. He was the first of a long line of Egyptian Prime Ministers, mostly, like himself, men of peasant stock who had risen into the new middle class. His successor Nahas Pasha, who is Prime Minister of Egypt today, was also a fellah by birth.

But though the middle class came to power, the social structure of Egypt remained



J. Allan Cash

One of Egypt's 15,000,000 fellaheen, a class who have tilled the rich alluvial soil of Egypt since Pharaoh's days and remain the major source of the country's wealth

essentially aristocratic—as indeed it did throughout the rise of the middle class in 19th-century Britain. In course of time the Nationalist politicians became pashas themselves, acquired lands, directed companies, and were soon as rich and luxurious as the former Turkish ruling class, with, still, an undeveloped social conscience. For, as Nationalists, they were concerned less with internal reforms than with freedom from external control. Social inequalities remained. The middle class grew, with the progressive increase of education, of the Civil Service, of the legal and technical professions, of Egyptian participation in industry and trade. But as it grew it fell into two parts, upper and lower, 'haves' and 'have-nots'.

The Second World War brought a second influx of wealth to Egypt, enriching and expanding the upper middle class, so that former small traders and contractors could now afford, like the pashas, to flaunt Parisian

jewels and American cars. This merely intensified the gulf between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', emphasizing not only the absolute poverty of the fellaheen, but the relative poverty of the *effendim*, of the ever-multiplying ranks of government officials, Army and Police officers, doctors, lawyers, professional men, commercial employees: those former fellaheen who had received and profited by a Western education. The outstanding problem of the Egyptian statesman today is that of the integration into the social community firstly of the fellah, but secondly, perhaps more urgently, of the effendi. Equally, the problem of foreign powers, in their relations with Egypt, becomes increasingly that of relations with this large, new, rising middle class.

What is this effendi like? There are several types. There is, for instance, a young man called Mohammed, from Upper Egypt. He still bears the name and practises the religion of his father. But he has forsaken his father's village for the big city of Cairo. And he has exchanged his father's turban and flowing *galabiyeh* for the superior tarbush, the pin-stripe suit, and the collar and tie of the Western city 'gent'. This change of clothes symbolizes a fundamental change of outlook. Firstly, Mohammed has become detached from the soil, from the roots of his ancestors. The idea of the primitive mud village where he was born is now repugnant to him, and he revisits it as seldom as possible. His affection for his father is tinged with a sense of shame that he should still be illiterate, superstitious, degraded by labour. Mohammed boasts a degree in engineering. No-one now can oblige him to take off his coat and roll up his sleeves. Never will he stoop to soil his hands with manual labour.

Mohammed works in a government office. He has just enough to live on, if he lives frugally, renting one small room. He has not too much work to do, and very little, perhaps too little, responsibility. For the Civil Service is overstaffed, and authority is over-centralized. His prospects of promotion are slow and not too sure. He has no family connections, none of the personal influence which has raised some of his colleagues into better-paid jobs. Moreover each change of government brings changes in office staff, threat-

ening his own position and giving him a sense of insecurity. Mohammed would perhaps prefer a job with some commercial firm, offering better financial prospects. That should be easy enough to obtain, now that legislation ensures that every firm shall employ seventy per cent of Egyptians in technical posts. But the best firms demand a standard of efficiency to which Mohammed, unless his character and abilities are above average, may be unable to attain.

Materially, therefore, Mohammed's prospects are discouraging. Psychologically he suffers from a certain sense of loneliness and frustration. Where are his roots? No longer in the soil. No longer in his family, however loyal to them he may remain. Still, perhaps, in his religion. But this is no longer sufficient to him, as it was to his father. Mohammed's roots are in his modern education, in the schools where the new world of the West was first revealed to him, seeming to offer him limitless opportunity. His personal loyalties, perhaps, are to some former teacher, to whom he still clings with an affectionate devotion.

But his education, despite the tar-bush and the pin-stripe suit, has brought him disillusionment. On the narrow, material plane it has earned him a job, though perhaps with limited opportunity. On the wider, spiritual plane it has given him nothing. Mohammed has absorbed Western education, but not Western culture. European philosophy, art, music, literature are still beyond his scope. He reads little but the newspapers. His world of entertainment is the cinema. His intellectual interests are confined to the technicalities of engineering. Mohammed had broken his links with the East, but his links with the West are still tenuous. He has forsaken one tradition without acquiring another. He has renounced his past. But he has yet to find a future. Miss Freya Stark has described him as a young traveller steering into the open sea, in an untried boat, with no coastline or anchorages in sight.

What, in this predicament, is the effendi to do? He reacts to it in several ways. One solution is to drift with the tide. Mohammed's friend Ismail becomes an opportunist, bowing to the prevailing wind of cynicism, pro-



Keystone Press

Son of a fellah, Nahas Pasha, Premier of Egypt, governs both effendim and fellaheen. He is seen testifying at the trial of the alleged assassins of a former colleague

fitting, when and how he can, by the irregularities which still infect the public service, surviving, almost as a tradition, from Turkish times. This is the line of least resistance which, if it does not lead him to some sheltered harbour, will at least enable him to keep his craft afloat. It is a material solution, in keeping with the philosophy of the 'haves'.

Another solution is to sail against the tide. Mohammed himself, in his vacuum, turns to politics. His sense of social grievance, his restlessness, his pent-up emotionalism, his craving for heroics make him an easy target for the political agitator. Egypt's 100,000 university students are a powerful weapon in the hands of rival political parties. They are exploited by and against the government in power, against the British, against both. Mohammed, at the modern Fouad I University in Cairo, missed many of his classes and failed in his first exams through becoming involved in political strikes.



F. Kersting

Associated Press

The Egyptian middle class. (Inset) Effendim at ease in a Cairo café. (Above) Students of the Fouad I University, Cairo, battle with police at the opening of term; examination results suffer

His approach to politics is emotional and subjective. His predicament, as he sees it, is none of his fault. It must therefore be somebody else's fault: the fault of a ruling class which denies him his just opportunities; or the fault, as the ruling class assures him, of the British, who, by maintaining troops on the Suez Canal, still deny Egypt her rightful freedom. Mohammed reacts electrically to words and slogans and vague conceptions. Today he is shouting for "Evacuation!" or "Unity of the Nile Valley!" Tomorrow (who knows?) he may be shouting "*A la lanterne!*" or "Workers of the World Unite!" At the worst the political enthusiasms of the young Egyptians can be an actual danger to Anglo-Egyptian friendship and a potential danger to Egypt's internal security. At the best his political allegiances tend to be a matter of personalities rather than principles, an

expression of shifting loyalties to one party leader or another, fanned hither and thither by the polemics of the popular press.

For this reason a section of the middle class prefers to turn its back on politics altogether. Aziz, the middle-aged clerk, sees political principles submerged by party strife and personal jobbery. He mistrusts the democratic intentions of the ruling class, feels helpless to influence affairs, and seldom troubles to record his vote at elections. He may disagree equally with the policies and political slogans of Government and Opposition. But he finds it more prudent not to say so. He retires to live, as best he can, in a backwater bounded by work and home and family.

These three Egyptians—Ismail sacrificing his principles for his interests, Mohammed rebelling against he knows not what, Aziz relapsing into apathy—are victims of the

growing-pains of a modern 'East-is-West' society. They may be extreme examples of the large effendi class. But each reflects, in some degree, its problems and disorders. It is, relatively speaking, a new class. But it is a worthy class, which offers great hope for the future of the Middle Eastern countries. Perhaps its most stable element in Egypt is the Army officer, with his developed sense of responsibility. The effendi at his best is quick-minded, human and responsive; physically and morally sound; with a respect for knowledge, a love of social justice, a sense of service, an earnest desire for improvement and a capacity for idealism. Between the pashas on the one hand and the fellaheen on the other, he is the potential backbone of Egypt. Moreover, in view of his rapidly increasing numbers, he is the ruling class of the future. Yet he is often discontented. The task of Egypt's rulers today is to relieve this discontent, to give social and political cohesion to the effendi class, and to ensure that its influence grows outwards to the benefit rather than inwards to the detriment of the community.

The present government of Egypt, the first, perhaps, to be freely elected, is aware



Black Star

King Farouk takes the salute at a review of military cadets. Army officers are perhaps the most stable element among the Egyptian effendim

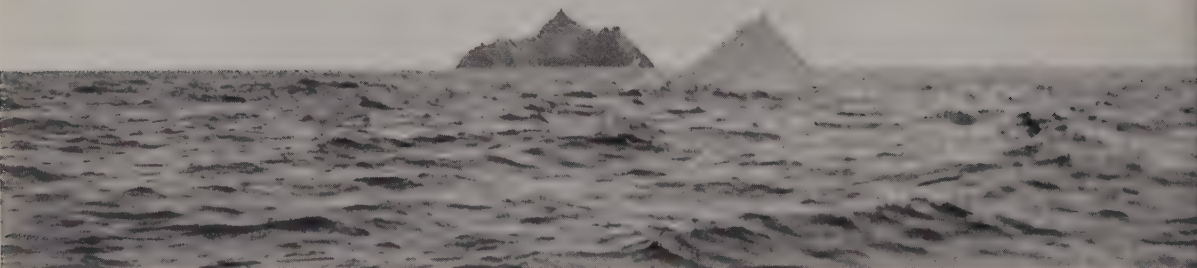
of this problem. In one respect it is better equipped than its predecessors to solve it. The classic barrier to social and political progress in the Middle East is the gulf, not merely between the 'haves' and 'have-nots', but between age and youth. In a society which is still to a great extent patriarchal the old cling jealously to power; the young are denied their chance and grow embittered. Their bitterness is the greater when, as today, they consider themselves better-educated than their fathers. In Egypt this gulf, at last, is narrowing. For the first time the country has a government with a preponderance of younger ministers: men of energy and sincerity, with a wider education and a keener social conscience than the Nationalists of 1919, men who are as much concerned with Egypt's social and economic problems as with her national aspirations. These men represent the large effendi class of today, as their seniors represented the smaller effendi class of 1919. This is, perhaps, their first effective emergence to power in any Arab country.

Their task is to combat social unrest. Thanks to the vicissitudes of the Palestine war and to the activities of a subversive society, the Ikhwan el Muslimeen, which stirred up effendi and fellah alike against the state, a situation exists from which only the Communists or other extremists can benefit and to which the Egyptians are opening their eyes. The task of these new ministers, in conjunction with their elders, is to develop schemes of social and economic reform from which the effendi as well as the fellah will benefit, and which alone can raise the Egyptian standard of living to a level which spells security. There is every sign that they are facing this problem.

But man, and particularly Eastern man, cannot live by bread alone. Egypt, and above all the Egyptian middle class, is searching for a new ideal. That ideal can only be democracy, and the task of the present rulers of Egypt is nothing more nor less than to make democracy work, in the political, in the economic, and in the philosophical sense. If they have the capacity and, above all, the will to achieve this, they can win the confidence of the effendi, make him feel that he has a genuine stake in the community, turn him into a useful democratic citizen, and provide him with that sense of tradition and purpose which alone can steer him through the perilous shoals of the modern, Western world.

Skellig Michael

by GEOFFREY GRIGSON



All photographs by T. H. Mason

Among the Places of the Mind which gave the title to Geoffrey Grigson's last book, and to which his tastes as a poet and traveller have attracted him, islands rank high. So, evidently, did they for the Irish monks who settled, perhaps 1400 years ago, on the far fringe of the Atlantic

If you spread out the Ordnance Survey maps of Ireland, of the west coast from Donegal in the north to Kerry in the south, it is surprising how often you will see in Gothic letters the words Church or Oratory. You find these Gothic letters of antiquity on Rathlin, O'Byrne Island, Achill, Clare, Tory Island, the Blaskets, and now and then a saint's name will be added. If you cross to the islands, still perhaps in the greasy bottom of a curragh which glitters with mackerel scales, the humble ruins you find on the bare and brown backs of these Atlantic islands survive from a remote Christianity, from that extraordinary flowering of devotion and meditation which began with the mission of St Patrick.

Patrick came to Ireland in 432. He was trained, or so it appears, in an island monastery in the Mediterranean, and though he was sympathetic to monasticism, he did his main work in Ireland through bishops and secular clergy. Monasticism began there in his own century, but it was after his death (Patrick died in 461) in the 6th century and the 7th that monasteries sprang up all over Ireland. It was in these centuries that so many of the Irish saints and monks felt the need to live more austere, more purely, more by themselves on the immense shores and the unfriendly islands of the Atlantic. They went into the desert. They built themselves monasteries much smaller than those on the mainland or in the richer country. They made the west of Ireland into a Thebaid.

Indeed the rule they lived by was that of the Egyptian monk, St Pachomius, who was the founder of monasticism, of ordered meditation, in the deserts of Upper Egypt.

Of all the relics of this Christianity pushed to the last verge of the known world the one I most wanted to visit, and have lately visited, was the monastery on Skellig Michael, more than eight miles out in the Atlantic, off the blackness of Kerry. I cannot pretend that I went there very well prepared. Accounts of Skellig Michael or Great Skellig and of Little Skellig which lies alongside in the swell of the Atlantic, have to be searched for in libraries, and it was a search I had not made. My clue—enough certainly to drive me on—was botanical and not archaeological. In a guide to Irish plants I had read that the Skelligs were pinnacles of rock: "Great Skellig", the account of a few lines went on, "rises like a cathedral to 714 feet; a group of ruined beehive huts, the dwellings of early anchorites, clings to its precipitous slopes. The Little Skellig, also lofty, is the breeding place of thousands of gannets." It was not accurate altogether, it gave a wrong picture, but it decided me to go, and it brought me past Killarney, and down through the Kerry mountains, and along Dingle Bay, and across the ferry to the village of Knights Town in Valencia Island. Knights Town, I reckoned, would be one of the nearest villages to Skellig Michael where we could hire a motorboat. I knew a little of the difficulties of landing on islands, not to say pinnacles of

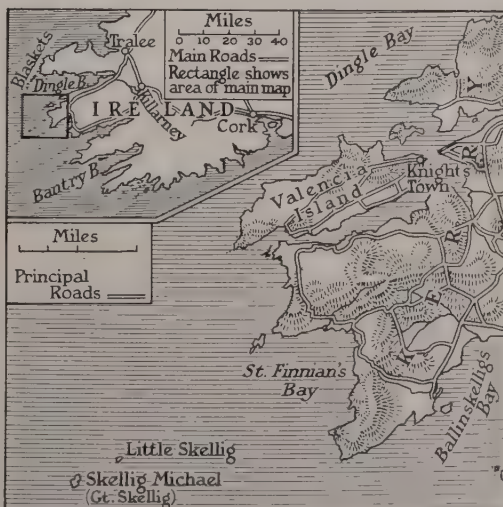
rock, in the Atlantic, so as we went slowly across Ireland in the train, stopping at every station, I was wondering if the weather would last, and watching, a bit anxiously, to see how much the grass alongside was being bent over in the wind. Not much, though the wind freshened and the grasses became more agitated as the train crept along the side of the mountain above Dingle Bay. We were lucky. The wind remained gentle, and the sea quiet; and—at a price—it was not difficult to get a motor-boat for the day. I read later how in the nineties a large party of the Royal Society of Antiquaries in Ireland waited, with their ladies, to see if they could cross to Skellig from Dingle. "By courtesy of the Rear-Admiral Commanding" they were to be transported in H.M. Gunboat *Banterer*. The *Banterer* arrived through the mist. The lieutenant would take the learned men, but would not be responsible for the learned men's wives, who were left behind on the quay disappointed and protesting. The *Banterer* sailed out of the mist into the sunshine and the perfection of a quiet Atlantic.

Valencia lies within a great natural harbour circled with mountains, a good way in from the sea; and from Knights Town, at least, Skellig Michael was invisible. The journey from the pier would be about eighteen miles, nearly half of it down the fiord to the coast. This meant that Skellig would still be invisible until we crept out between Valencia Island and the mainland of Kerry. And at last we did so creep out of the fiord, from calm onto the mild heave of the Atlantic, and there nine miles away, nine miles out from the immense black cliffs we were leaving, was Skellig Michael on the horizon. The sea was blue, the clouds behind Skellig Michael (and Little Skellig) were a pale dove colour. Skellig Michael shot up from its narrow base, but not as a perfect triangle since the high point was cut off by the clouds. Now and again as we came nearer the clouds shifted and the whole immense triangle of the island was clear. Little Skellig was far less regular in shape, and since it is a good many feet lower, was not capped with the clouds. Great Skellig changed slowly from blue to dark. Little Skellig, under its wildly fretted outline of Gothic pinnacles, appeared by contrast to be in the sunshine. After a while I suspected and then became certain that the sunshine was made up of all the ivory-white gannets crowding along the ledges. Little Skellig, so James Fisher tells me, is the third largest gannetry in the world. I could believe it when we were close enough to see the ledges and the gannets passing like snowflakes against the

darkness of Skellig Michael, and when at last we entered the smell of guano which extends a way out to sea from the gannetry.

I must confess (and it is, and was then, a little disappointing) that as well as the relics of Celtic Christianity on Skellig Michael there exists a lighthouse, though on the side towards New York and the Statue of Liberty. It means that it is easier to land in fair weather, Trinity House having long ago contrived a quay and a minute harbour and blasted a path around the precipices from the quay to the lighthouse. But it also means that the lower steps which climbed nearly six hundred feet, very sharply, from the landing place to the beehive huts, were also blasted away. After you land nowadays, you walk prosaically for some two hundred yards along a narrow well-contrived road, before you turn off and start to scale the island by another flight of steps.

After five hundred steps or so, there comes a point when you need—or when I needed—to rest. You rest at a spot called Christ's Saddle, and there you realize for the first time the configuration of Great Skellig. Resting on the cushions of sea-pink, just under the clouds which were veiling past, I could now see that Skellig Michael was not one acute triangle, but two, joined by the bare earth and rock of Christ's Saddle. Indeed from north and south of Bolus Head (which is the nearest point on the mainland) Great Skellig always appears as a twin-peaked mountain and not as the single, triangular peak it had been to us as we crossed from Valencia Island. We climbed again, the steps turning to the right up the lower peak. That botanical account prepared me for a number of beehive huts, in ruins, scattered here and there among



A. J. Thornton

the sea-pink and the scurvy-grass, and clinging, clinging as it said, to the precipices. I was not expecting these steps, I was not expecting the pavement we had now reached up above the Atlantic, or the high wall now pierced by more steps and a doorway, through which we entered into an enclosure. And inside the enclosure? Inside, like conical heaps of hay drying on an Irish field, there stretched a row of *clochans*, or beehive huts. In ruins? Not a bit of it. They were more or less perfect. Nothing was ruined except the small church of St Michael around which the huts were grouped on three sides. And if the huts were built in the 8th century or the 7th, the ruined church had obviously been a later mediaeval building.

At once I realized I had seen all this before, though less perfectly. I remembered the slope of another island, St Helen's, a desert island, smaller and less steep, and thick with bracken and brambles, among the Isles of Scilly. Incendiaries from a German raider burnt this Scillonian island off during the war, and revealed a Celtic monastery on just such a plan as this. In the centre the ruins of a mediaeval church, around the church the foundations of one cell or hut after another, and all around them the stumps of another such wall enclosing the precincts or "cashel" of the monastery. Only here on Skellig Michael all was more or less complete. The first large hut, perhaps the refectory, the common meeting-place, was perfect. Stones of white quartz let into the conical dry walling above the doorway were formed into a cross. We bent under the wide slate lintel, and went into the clean spacious interior. It was lit by small window-holes above our heads, the floor was paved, pegs of slate stuck out from the walls. From these perhaps depended on thongs the leather "book-cases", or satchels, in which the liturgical books were kept. A few such Irish satchels have survived. The use of them belonged to monasteries of the Pachomian Rule, and Curzon found satchels of the kind in use in one of the monasteries he visited in 1865 by the Natron Lakes in Egypt. He gives a picture of them hanging from pegs in the wall in his book on the monasteries of the Levant.

The Irish monasteries, and Skellig Michael, and no doubt the monastery on St Helen's in the Isles of Scilly, followed, as I have said, the rule of St Pachomius, so far away in Egypt, in most of the details of their arrangement and no doubt of their monastic life. Here, as St Pachomius laid it down, was the surrounding wall, the refectory, the cells, the church, though perhaps the original church of Skellig

Michael was the beehive oratory alongside the little ruined, roofless mediaeval church. This beehive hut has an altar built into the eastern wall, and above the altar a slit-shaped window giving a view only of the sea. Beehive is accurate enough, but the word 'hut' does not justly describe the shape, character, or skilful design and well-laid masonry of these ancient *clochans*, which have survived, more or less intact, a thousand years of Atlantic exposure. A High Cross, roughly shaped and incised, sticks up and leans over to one side among the cells, like a totem pole in a primitive village. Just beyond it, raised up by a wall and stuck with smaller crosses, there is a minute and no doubt overcrowded graveyard. Built into the ground below the huts are two wells, making small pools from which the monks drew their water and also washed as they were enjoined to do before eating.

It was extraordinary to be out and up on this rock, this maritime mountain, this Michael's Mount, where under the proper protection of St Michael the Archangel, the Irish monks had reproduced the religious austerities of the Egyptian desert. Enough is known of Irish monasticism to be sure of how they lived their penitential life as a *militia Christi* on Skellig Michael. You can find the details in Father Ryan's *Irish Monasticism*. They watched and prayed and worked in self-mortification. They prayed before dawn by candlelight, and again at sunset, and after a little sleep again at midnight when they were woken up for the night vigil, the *nocturnae solemnitates*. The ascetism of labour was enjoined for them under the Pachomian Rule: they could neither talk nor laugh at work, but rather they must pray, and meditate and chant psalms. On Skellig Michael, on the precipitous slopes (which drop away to the Atlantic from the edges of the cashel walls) you might think there was little opportunity for the gardening and the corn-growing of the Irish monasteries. But there was no doubt a garden within the walls, and though it is now much eroded, corn may have been grown on the soil of Christ's Saddle between the two peaks. An 18th-century historian of Kerry maintained that Christ's Saddle had been cultivated and that ridges of the plots where corn had been grown were visible then inside the cashel. Vegetables, flour and water and bread were the chief items of the austere diet of Celtic monasticism, but in spite of the Pachomian Rule, flesh seems to have been allowed. In St Columba's monastery on the Scottish island of Iona, they ate oxen, sheep, seals, and fish. On Skellig they could have



The steps, made probably by the monks themselves, climb some 600 feet up the steep sides of Skellig Michael towards the monastery. Here they rise from the eroded soil of Christ's Saddle which separates the two pinnacles of the island, and on which the monks may have tilled their plots of corn. Mother Carey's Chickens now make nests underneath the steps

On the side of Skellig Michael which faces the open Atlantic there now stands a lighthouse. The keepers use this modern road, built into the precipices, which runs from the cove where the monks used to land. Many of the old paths and steps which criss-crossed this narrow island have been carried away by falls of rock or are hidden under campion and sea-pink





(Above) A cashel wall surrounds the monastery, high above Little Skellig, third largest gannetry in the world. (Below, left) The high cross and drywalling have endured 1000 years of exposure to the Atlantic. (Below, right) One of the most perfect of the clochans, with a cross of white stones high above the door



had the seals and the fish, and they perhaps ate the puffins which breed on the island as well as gannets from Little Skellig.

I was doubtful at first whether the steps and the stone paths were as old as the monastery, the buildings of which would go back, as I say, at least to the 8th or 7th century. Long after the monastery had been deserted and up to the 18th century, Skellig Michael was an island to which pilgrims came and followed a journey of the Stations of the Cross, which ended on the high peak where the pilgrims, one by one, squeezed out through a cleft called the Needle's Eye and reached to a rock hanging out over the Atlantic on which a cross is engraved. The steps cover the island, go up and down and round and across the precipices. Here and there a landfall has carried them away, here and there they vanish under sea-pink. I thought they might belong to the later centuries of pilgrimage, but the monks certainly built stone paths in other monasteries, and I suspect that building them on Skellig and keeping them in order was a skilful and a dangerous part of that labour by which they mortified their bodies.

Of these Irish soldiers of Christ, living in a discipline severe beyond that of any army, we know at least one thing unprovided for in the Rule which St Pachomius laid down. We know that they wrote poems, or that some of them wrote poems, and these poems embody a clean-swept vision of delight in their calling, their religion, and the natural order created by the God they worshipped. One of these poems, a late one, though it was supposed to have been written by St Columba or Collum Cille, applies so much to Skellig Michael that you should search it out among the fine translations in Kenneth Jackson's *Early Celtic Nature Poetry*. I shall leave that to you, and say a little of the slender history of Skellig Michael.

It is not possible to tell exactly when it was founded or by whom. The bay across from the Skelligs is called St Finnian's Bay, and the foundation has been given, though not, I think, with much authority, to St Finnian, the great "tutor of the saints of Ireland", the instructor of St Brendan the Navigator and of St Columba. Finnian died in 549. The monastery may indeed have been founded by him or one of his disciples. Finnian deepened and advanced the monastic life, made it more strict, and his disciples founded a good many

island monasteries in which the life of contemplation was still further removed from the distractions and divisions of men. About 822, according to a story repeated in various annals, the Vikings raided Skellig Michael, climbed the steps into the cloud, and took off with them a monk named Edgall, but Skellig was not yet deserted and there are records in the *Annals of the Four Masters* of the death of monks or abbots on Skellig in 950 and 1044. Perhaps the monastery was occupied up to the Anglo-Norman seizure and settlement of Ireland, perhaps till later. It is still venerated. Stories are still told of it. Our boatmen told us, as Skellig was beginning to fade back to blue on the horizon, of the man who had taken water from one of the two wells within the cashel walls and how the water would not boil in his kettle. He told us—which is true enough—that the gannets from Little Skellig never settle on Skellig Michael; and you will find in Charles Smith's *State of the County of Kerry*, published in 1756, a story that "no bird hath the power to fly over that part of it where the chapels and walls stand, without first alighting on the ground, which they walk gently over, and then take wings".

I spent most of a day on Skellig Michael and came away reluctantly enough. Militant Protestants have had much to say of the selfishness and defeatism of the monastic life. I do not know. I am neither Protestant, except by upbringing, nor Catholic, but is it not moving to a degree, and not merely to a romantic degree, when we think of that withdrawn life in the wilderness of islands, off these Irish coasts, off Scotland, off Wales, off Brittany, in the Isles of Scilly, in the Farne Islands, and far up in the north in the Westmann Islands off Iceland? When we think of the quiet of that selfless and hard devotion to an end which is superhuman? Moving about the coasts of Kerry afterwards I understood what a symbol Skellig Michael must have been to those who were neither monks nor clergy, seeing it on the horizon, a single or a double peak, but always blue, always or often with its nimbus of white cloud, its trailing coif of holiness.

When we climbed down the steps, the last sound I heard on Skellig Michael was one which had been familiar to the monks, the cheeping (all the other birds had gone) of a late brood of Mother Carey's Chickens from a deep hole under the stone.

Corsica

by DOROTHY CARRINGTON

Dorothy Carrington's book The Traveller's Eye, published in 1947, surveyed the development of English travel-writing during the past four centuries. Since then she has spent much of her time in Corsica preparing a book about the island, Hot Granite, to be published by Longmans Green

At first sight Corsica appeared to me uninhabited, a Robinson Crusoe island improbably rising out of the Mediterranean a night's voyage from Marseilles. Approaching its shores at dawn I could detect no sign of human life in the chaotic pile of purple mountains, covered with vegetation dense as that of Central Africa, soaring to ragged peaks, dropping to beaches never yet, it seemed, trodden by man. I was actually surprised to find Ajaccio, brilliant with bougainvillaeas on white plaster, hidden at the head of an enormous bay.

Ajaccio is the capital; yet it is little more than a village glorified by a few homely hotels and, in a back street, the unpretentious house where Napoleon was born. After seeing his birthplace, his statues and his portraits, there is nothing to do but enjoy the view—the prodigious peacock-blue sweep of the bay, the turreted skyline of the mountains—the casino is mouldering, and in the *cafés* everyone seems half asleep.

Five minutes' drive out of the town one enters a virgin country. All the mountain slopes, right down to the sea, are covered by the *maquis*, a thick growth of evergreen shrubs—arbutus, myrtle, gum cistus and rosemary. Its scent is intoxicating; one can understand why Napoleon recalled it with nostalgia on his death-bed at St Helena. There are no patches of cultivation, no houses, except a few isolated fishermen's cottages, built, as a giant child might build, of unhewn granite blocks fitted together without mortar. Hardly a footprint marks the beaches which tempt one to bathe in every inlet, and when one bathes, one realizes that the fishermen, in spite of their display of boats and nets and lobster pots, are indolent, for shoals of little fish and huge solitary skate meander unalarmed between one's limbs.

On all the coast stretching northwards from Ajaccio up the west side of the island are few villages and fewer hotels. Yet the scenery is spectacular, the climate—winter and summer—balmy; if the Corsicans made any effort it could become the tourist centre of Europe. At Piana, a hamlet seventy-one kilometres north of Ajaccio, a forest of crim-

son granite spires springs, tier below tier, from the summit of the high cliffs to the shore; a sight fantastic at all times, unforgettable at sunrise and sunset, of Wagnerian splendour if one is lucky enough, as I once was, to come here on a night of full moon. At Porto, a few miles farther north, cliffs of the same crimson rock enclose a deep bay, lined with snowy sand, narrowing to a river gorge full of whispering eucalyptus trees. Here is not even a village, only a few humble pensions for those who are not prepared to camp upon the beach.

Between Porto and Calvi the coast is almost deserted; at Calvi, and its neighbouring town Ile-Rousse, some modern hotels make a half-hearted attempt to cash in on a landscape which makes that of the Côte d'Azur seem paltry. White Russian refugees first discovered the enchantment of Calvi, with its immense pine-fringed beach, its amazing back-drop of lilac mountains, its 16th-century ramparts encircling a more ancient citadel. This fortress town was a principal stronghold of the Genoese from the 13th to the 18th centuries (the five unhappy centuries of their occupation of Corsica), withstood repeated sieges, until in 1794 it was reduced by Hood, commanding an English fleet in support of Paoli, the Corsican independence leader. More than four thousand cannon balls, it is said, were shot into the town before it finally surrendered, and in this ferocious battle Nelson, captain of a ship, lost an eye. But the domed baroque church miraculously survived, as did the grandiose 15th-century Palais Guibega, which once belonged to a god-parent of Napoleon and is now a Russian night-club.

Ile-Rousse, founded in the mid 18th century by Paoli as an independent rival port, is a tame little town by comparison, somnolent under dusty planes. But a rosy granite peninsula forms a lake-like harbour, where occupants of the Hotel Napoleon, the most ambitious on the island, may bathe in the clearest aquamarine water I have ever seen.

These are the acknowledged beauty spots of Corsica; few foreigners ever visit the primitive village of Porto Vecchio, on the sub-



All photographs by E. C. T. Little and E. Gordon Barber

The ancient town of Calvi remained loyal to Genoa throughout successive Corsican rebellions and withstood many sieges. It was captured at last in 1794 by Hood, supporting the Corsican nationalists, after violent fighting in which Nelson lost an eye. It is now the most popular holiday-resort on the island



Retired to their native village to live on small pensions after twenty or thirty years' work in France or her colonies, these old men gladly slip back into the traditional primitive life and become indistinguishable from the peasants who stayed at home. Resting in the sun, they recall their active careers



The coasts of Corsica are almost deserted. Frequent invasions drove the inhabitants inland and for many miles only an occasional roughly-built fisherman's house such as this is to be seen. However, the fisherman's life is not difficult: the seas are full of fish and, as the lobster-pots show, langoustes



Corte, in the mountainous centre of the island, was for three centuries the pivot of the Corsican struggle for independence. Held in turn by Genoese, Corsicans and French, in 1762 it was taken by Paoli and became the seat of his independent Corsican government, only to be finally lost to the French in 1769



A mule cart waits at a street corner. There are few cars; Corsicans, through poverty or conservatism, prefer to travel by donkey or mule. Corte, peaceful enough today, is still the home of national patriotism, where traditional Corsican music, ancient songs of lament and revenge, are lovingly preserved

A peasant comes home to stable his goat on the ground floor of his house. In the turbulent past, Corsicans were afraid to live isolated on their farms; today they still live crowded together in villages. They ride out to their land at dawn and return home at sunset, taking their livestock with them





Vizzavona, standing in pine forests, surrounded by magnificent mountain scenery, has all the charm of a remote Alpine resort. Visitors may fish for trout in the many streams and ski on the upper slopes in winter, which is usually so warm that they can drive down to Ajaccio to bathe in the sea on the same day



These towers, now falling into decay, were built by the Genoese on coastal promontories all round Corsica to give warning of the hostile incursions so frequently made by the Saracens

tropical south-east coast, where a vast lagoon, vast enough to accommodate several navies, is bordered by cork forests, surrounded by conical mountains furry with vegetation to their summits like those in Chinese landscape paintings. Hardly more frequented is Bonifacio, on the southern tip of the island, enclosed by formidable ramparts on a mountain promontory from which can be seen the craggy Sardinian shore. The limestone cliffs of the adjoining coast are hollowed into caves; one, the Sdragonata, is cathedral-sized, and its water is bluer than that of the Blue Grotto of Capri.

As for the interior of Corsica, it has an intimidating—if unjustified—reputation for discomfort, so that this little island, only a hundred and eighty-three kilometres from north to south, eighty-three from east to west, has remained largely unappreciated by the outside world. Vizzavona, high in the mountains behind Ajaccio in aromatic pine forests, is a resort only for a few enterprising students, who, such is the excellence of the winter climate, can ski here in the morning and drive down to bathe in Ajaccio the same day. Few visitors penetrate the miles of ancient chestnut forests which cover the mountains between the maquis and the pines; few climb the bleak, heathy, Scottish-looking slopes round Corte, in the geographical centre of the island and, even more surprisingly, hardly anyone knows of the Bavella, in the central south, a gorge of scarlet rock dropping twelve hundred metres from the mountains to the sea, an unadvertised Grand Canyon in miniature.

One may delight, as I did, in the desolation of Corsica, in the absence of tourists, casinos and petrol fumes, sleep gratefully in the peasant inns in vaulted rooms equipped only with a bed, a jug of cold water and three nails on the wall; but why, one cannot help asking oneself, have the Corsicans never exploited their country, a country with such magnificent scenery and climate, so close to the continent and capable of attracting the holiday-makers of the world?

The explanation lies in the Corsican character, which is itself explained by Corsican history and geography. From the time of the fall of Rome until the French occupation in the late 18th century Corsica was perpetually at war.

Rival nations, Pisa, Genoa, Aragon, France and England, squabbled through the centuries for the possession of this island, which had produced the most esteemed oysters and wines for the imperial Roman table, which

provided the finest harbours in the western Mediterranean, until its riches and advantages were practically destroyed.

Foreign rulers did little for Corsica except plunder it. The Pisans, who held it for two hundred years from 1077 were the most constructive; a few of their solid arcaded bridges can still be seen, and some of their fine and curious romanesque churches: the great ruined Cannonica deserted in the marshes south of Bastia, a port on the north-east coast, the handsome cathedral of the Nebbio at Saint-Florent on the opposite side of the island, and the strange chapel at Aregno, above Ile-Rousse, its façade decorated with granite sculpture, massive and brutal as the prehistoric sculpture of the South Sea islands, representing unexplained symbolic monsters. The Genoese were too greedy and distracted to do much except squeeze tribute out of Corsica; the only relics of their oppressive rule are the sumptuous, worldly baroque churches in their strongholds, at Calvi, and at Bastia, and the watch-towers on nearly every coastal promontory which gave warning of the ever-to-be-expected Saracen raids.

Recurrent attacks drove the inhabitants inland; the rich coastal plains became marshes, plague-spots of malaria, the harbours silted up. In the safety of the mountains the Corsicans could hold out indefinitely: against invaders, legitimate rulers and rival patriot bands. The interior of the island is ideal for guerilla warfare, for the mountains do not run in ridges, but rather form deep amphitheatres between which communication is always difficult, and in winter almost impossible.

French rule brought peace and order, but not prosperity. The French have built roads, bridges and schools, but they have not been disposed to provide capital for a people who seem uninterested in wealth or progress. During the warring centuries Corsicans lost the habit of industry; even today they do not seek riches or modern efficiency, but only leisure to live as they please. Hatred of foreign domination made them insular and conservative; war taught them austerity; unlike most Mediterranean races they are severe to the point of puritanism in their morals. Foreign holiday-makers shock them. "What, encourage tourists?" one influential and educated Corsican exclaimed to me in horror. "But what would our grandmothers say if our daughters learned to wear shorts?" So they prefer to forgo the wealth that would accrue to them by turning their island into a new Riviera-cum-Tyrol, prefer to live their

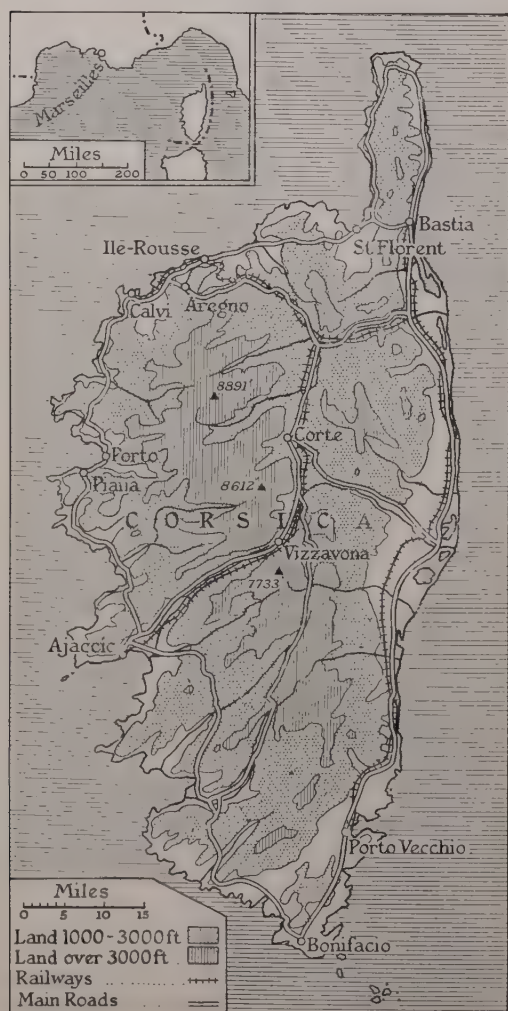
traditional life in their rough stone houses, where the family bed, the bench and table and the guns hanging on the wall are almost their only possessions.

Characteristic Corsican life begins about five miles from the coast. Here the villages are packed tight for safety on rocky pinnacles, the houses built like fortresses, several storeys high, widening at the base, the lower windows criss-crossed with inch-thick iron bars. These villages are not, like those elsewhere in western Europe, marketing centres, but peasant communities existing for defence, for in the turbulent past no Corsican dared to live in rural isolation on his own land. Donkeys, pigs and goats are stabled on the ground-floor of the houses; at dawn the peasants ride out to their land, returning at nightfall with their produce. Each family cultivates enough for its own needs: vines and olive trees grow on the mountain slopes; maize, wheat, toma-

atoes and melons in the hollows; sheep, cattle and goats graze in patches of pasture in the maquis. Methods of agriculture are biblical: corn is sown and reaped by hand, threshed by oxen dragging an unhewn stone over a flat circle of ground. But the soil is fertile, and most peasants have the surplus of at least one product for sale. Admirable wines come from the Patrimonio district on the north-west coast, olive oil from the villages of the Balagne near Calvi; sheep's milk cheese, roughly prepared at home, is sold to travelling merchants to be matured into that which reaches the public as Roquefort.

In the chestnut forests the inhabitants contrive to live almost without cultivating. Pigs fed on chestnuts provide succulent pork and ham; chestnut flour makes an appetizing bread; plentiful trout can be fished in the mountain streams. Corsicans are not by nature attracted to agriculture, or indeed to any manual work, which they regard as humiliating. After war they prefer intellectual occupations, and the exercise of authority. In consequence, the more ambitious leave the island to pursue professional careers, to become schoolteachers, lawyers, judges, policemen, civil servants in France or her colonies. But at the end of twenty or thirty years patriotism invariably recalls them to their villages, where they retire on small pensions to form those groups of gossiping old men one sees in every street. Whatever position they have achieved abroad they slip willingly back into the old peasant life and soon become indistinguishable from those who have stayed at home. In nearly every family at least one child is picked for such a career. Some very poor peasants with whom I stayed had selected a son of fifteen as a future schoolmaster, and every evening I watched him, exempted from the usual chores, gravely reading about the Chinese Empire in a geography book dated 1905.

Those who stay at home must endure a monotonous routine. There are not only no cinemas in the villages, but few traditional festivals or amusements. Life has always been too hard for such indulgences. Those who go to Corsica in expectation of gay peasant costumes, local dances and songs, will be disconcerted by the solemn villagers, the men in brown corduroys, the women in permanent mourning black, whose chief relaxation is to sit up all night talking of ghosts and legends, philosophy and religion. It is true that traditional songs do exist, but these are mainly concerned with death. In former times funerals were preceded by days of mourning when certain women, celebrated for their



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poetic talent, came to improvise, to traditional musical themes, verses in praise of the dead one. As most deaths were deaths by violence the songs usually took the form of incitements to revenge, the *voceri*, sung to melancholy airs derived from the Moors, which are still known to old women in the remoter villages.

The memory of these songs is dying out; but in Corte I found an intelligent young priest who is endeavouring to keep it alive and to encourage the young as poets and singers. Corte is still the home of Corsican patriotism and culture, as is natural in a town which for centuries was the focal point in the struggle for national independence. Built round an almost inaccessible citadel, grim and grey as Edinburgh castle, it was held in turn by Genoese, Corsicans and French, defended by local patriots with fanatical heroism. Here the wife of General Gaffori threatened to blow herself up with all her family rather than surrender to the Genoese; here the women vowed never to marry while the Genoese remained on the island so as to bring no more enslaved sons into the world. For seven years, from 1762, the dream of Corsican independence was realized, when Pasquale Paoli, having captured Corte, made it his capital and ruled the island on a democratic system which anticipated the ideas of the French revolution. Then the French stepped in, and after their victory at Ponte Nuovo in 1769 Corte surrendered to them for the last time.

The permanent resistance movement of the Corsicans has developed characteristics less dour than indifference to wealth and pleasure, and preoccupation with death: the virtues of hospitality, loyalty to friends. My friendships with Corsicans have proved unshakable, and in every house I have entered, however poor, at whatever time, the occupants have hastened to offer the best food and wine they could lay hands on. In the houses of the few rich this entertainment may be overwhelming. Most of the land is owned by peasant proprietors, but there are a few big landowners who live the isolated life of old-fashioned country squires, shooting partridge in the maquis, boar hunting, fishing, driving in pony traps to visit distant neighbours—for



Under Pasquale Paoli (1725-1807) Corsica attained independence. A friend of Samuel Johnson, he died in London

most are too conservative to own cars. Satisfied and insular, they seldom go abroad.

It is to be questioned whether the Corsicans will ever develop their country: their potentially profitable tourist industry, their agriculture, which could yield an exportable surplus, their asbestos quarries, as yet hardly worked, the export of their plentiful timber and *langoustes* and cork; questionable whether the French, absorbed by other problems, will ever give them the capital to do so. In the meantime the island decays visibly in the sun: the ambitious go abroad, the top-soil is washed into the sea, forests are burnt by accident and never replanted, roads slide over precipices, whole villages fall into ruin; while those who stay at home are content to preserve no more than their dignity, their customs, and their outmoded but not unappealing national character.

The Caribs of Dominica

by PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR

Several years of 'hard' wandering in the Balkans prepared Major Leigh Fermor for the extraordinary operation organized by him when a German general was captured and removed from Crete. His abilities as a writer are less known: evidence of them will shortly be forthcoming in his book, The Traveller's Tree, published by John Murray, extracts from which form the basis of this article

OUR preparation to visit the last surviving Caribs—the lonely handful of forest-dwellers in the precipitous British West Indian island of Dominica that are the only representatives of the former *Herrenvolk* of the Caribbean—was a small adventure in itself. The horses, however, were found at last, the negro porters assembled, the guide engaged. Leaving the only road of northern Dominica, we crossed the river, and found ourselves in the upper marches of the Carib domain.

The trees soon closed over the steep bridle path, dappling the soft, red clay with ragged stripes of sunlight. The road twisted as it climbed, and the thickness of the sodden leaves turned it into a dense and tortuous cavern. Each convolution hoisted our little procession higher into the foot-hills of Morne Diablotin, whose leafy cone pierced the sky miles away. The path grew level at last, and through a gap in the trees we could gaze from our lofty headland into a deep gorge downy with tree-tops; the sea reached inland between the steep sides of the canyon to meet the emerging river.

All day long our path followed this long climb and fall. The island is so rich in rivers that it is rumoured to possess one for each day of the year. The road suddenly widened into

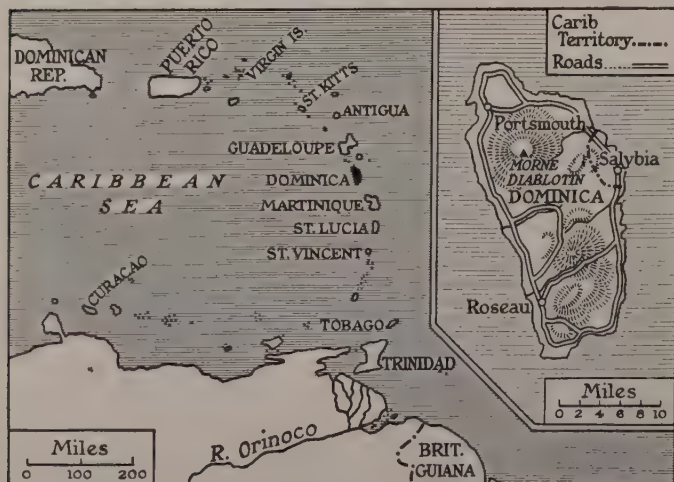
a clearing, where a group of shingle huts lay back under the trees, and by the edge of the path a group of men were standing, as though they were expecting us. So sharp was the contrast of their complexion and bearing with those of the islanders, that I thought for a moment that they were white men. But they were Caribs.

We dismounted, and walked towards them, and, as we met, hats were raised on either side with some solemnity. We all shook hands. This meeting with the last survivors of this almost extinct race of conquerors was as stirring and impressive in its way as if the encounter had been with Etruscans or Hittites.

We were now able to see that they were either ivory-coloured in complexion or a deep bronze, with features that were, except for the well-defined noses, almost Mongolian or Esquimaux. Their straight black hair was cut across their foreheads in a fringe. They had a dignity of presence that even their hideous European rags could not stifle. A tall man in the middle, smoking a pipe and equipped with an elaborate walking-stick, took charge of us with a diffident, almost Manchu solemnity. This was George Frederick, the king or chief of the Caribs, and the elders that surrounded him were members of

the Carib Council. He led us up a steep path through the leaves to a little green glade in front of his own shingle hut, where we sat down under a mango tree, and leaned our backs against a half-excavated canoe.

An old man in a doorway was weaving a basket. These are remarkable things, accomplished with great intricacy and finish. Different coloured rushes and leaves are shredded into fine strands, and woven into complex angular patterns that give the effect of mosaic. The basket is composed of two deep oblongs, open



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Dominica is one of the most mountainous of the West Indian islands. The author's party (above) are crossing a river in the foot-hills of the highest peak, Morne Diablotin, by a primitive suspension bridge leading into the north of the Carib territory. Here the last of the conquerors of the Caribbean, diminishing steadily in numbers, still live under the chieftainship of their elected 'King' (right) George Frederick





Although the Caribs have lost most of their ancient customs (the use of the bow and arrow and warpaint, cannibalism and inter-island raids), a few survive. Some of their means of communication are almost prehistoric: the mournful blast of (above) the conch-shell still echoes through the leafy ravines. (Below) The features of the Carib Indians are distinctly Mongoloid: the pale bronze complexion and straight black hair of these children are more immediately suggestive of China than of the West





One of the many survivals is basket-making. The baskets are woven with rapidity and skill. The hair of the younger man suggests an admixture of African blood—by no means rare in recent years

on one side, which fit into each other as smoothly as the halves of a Revelation suitcase and grip each other so tightly that no other fastening is needed. The fineness of the mesh makes them completely water-tight. As we watched the strands overlap in the skilful fingers, a dozen coconuts came thundering from a palm tree, and a young Carib slid down the trunk with his bare cutlass in his hand. The king opened them deftly, and offered us the milk.

The presence of these men sends the mind winging into the vague centuries before the November Sunday in 1493 when, with a volley of poisoned arrows, the ancestors of these Caribs drove the sailors of Columbus back to their boats, forcing the Admiral to set sail again in the direction of Guadeloupe. How many centuries earlier, nobody knows, for the only traces of that dim pre-Columbian age are half-a-dozen lumps of stone scattered among the islands, incised with a few barbaric

golliwogs, and all the rest is surmise. It is now generally agreed, however, that, like their peaceful predecessors in the Caribbean chain, the Arawaks, their origins can be traced to the South American hinterland between the basins of the Orinoco and the Amazon, where both Arawaks and Caribs still survive.

When the Spaniards came to the Windwards and Leewards in 1493, Columbus dropped anchor at each of the islands, went ashore on some of them, and symbolically claimed them for his king. In nearly every case he was greeted by a fierce resistance; in Guadeloupe the men were reinforced by an army of Amazons who came down to the shore to loose off their poisoned shafts. He sailed away again, and on paper Hewanorra became St Lucia, Madanino became Martinique, Karoukera Guadeloupe, Wytoukoubouli Dominica, and so on, and that, for over a century, was all. There were brighter lures

for the Spaniards in Mexico and Peru, and a long war with these savages for a handful of green tufted rocks was an unprofitable thought. Dominican monks landed occasionally to convert the Caribs and were massacred. The Conquistadors Ponce de Leon and Jerrando, and even Sir Francis Drake, failed to dislodge the savages. The Caribs remained unchallenged masters of the Lesser Antilles. In the first decades of the 17th century, France and England started to settle in these languidly held possessions of Spain, and their wearisome two centuries of wars began. But the prolonged and ferocious resistance of the Caribs in some of the islands and the impossibility of subduing them prompted the English and French to agree, at the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, that Dominica, St Vincent, St Lucia and Tobago should remain neutral, with the Caribs in undisputed possession. De Rochefort and Fathers Du Tertre and Breton (who wrote a Carib dictionary, and translated parts of the liturgy into Carib) give us a clear idea of how these savages lived, but it is the pen of Father Labat that suddenly transforms these aboriginal phantoms into real and vivid people. It is he who tells us of their customs and superstitions, their methods of warfare and domestic life, and how they conquered the wild Arawaks, exterminating and devouring the men, and marrying the women. The Arawak tongue, he says, survived as a squaws' language; and, apart from their vernacular Carib, they also possessed a secret language of religion and council.

The neighbourhood of two elements as irreconcilable as the Caribs and the white colonists could only end in the extinction of one of them, and by the end of the 18th century the Caribs had virtually vanished as a race from all the islands except Dominica and St Vincent. They were removed from the latter island after a revolt, at the time of the French Revolution, to British Honduras. Their descendants are now as black as their West Indian neighbours.

The Caribs of Dominica remained the only authentic pocket of them but it was not large. Father Labat, at the beginning of the 18th century, reckoned that there could not be many more than two thousand in the island, though this number was certainly increased by countrymen fleeing from extermination in the other Antilles. In spite of the island's neutrality, many French planters settled there and imported slaves. It was finally assigned to the English in 1763, and, with short interregna of French invasion and

occupation, it has remained in their possession ever since. Roseau and Portsmouth were suddenly full of Union Jacks and redcoats and powdered wigs. As the colony became organized and the population of slaves increased, the number of the Caribs shrank. Bit by bit, all three of their languages disappeared to be replaced by Creole and, during the first decades of the 19th century, a more plausible and, at any rate in appearance, more deep-rooted conversion to the Catholic faith took place. Cannibalism had died out long ago, and many other customs, including their war paint and their dress, vanished one by one. Lost in the overwhelming Negro world, they had ceased to be dangerous. In 1903 the British Government, disturbed at their decline in numbers through miscegenation and in prosperity through their inadaptability to alien ways, created by decree the Carib reserve where they now live. There, in these few miles of mountains and forests, scarcely five hundred remain, and of these many have a small amount of African blood. In the whole world there are now only about a hundred pure-blooded Caribs left, and the little rearguard is growing smaller every year. They are a doomed race lingering on the shores of extinction, and in a generation or two, unless some miracle of regeneration and fecundity intervenes, the black tide will have risen and swept them off the face of the earth for ever.

They are all, Caribs and mestizo-Caribs, consumingly proud of their race, and, whatever their internal feuds may be, they are a stubborn and compact community in their attitude to the outside world. For the last few decades they have been presided over by a sort of elective voivode with the style of king, though the title is legally in abeyance at the moment owing to certain troubles with the authorities in Roseau. The present king or chieftain, George Frederick, whose office entails a civil list of ten shillings monthly from British Government funds, is the head of the Carib Council, which is responsible for the conduct of Carib home affairs. George Frederick owes his present position to his ability to read and write English as well as Creole. Most of the other elders spoke it imperfectly and all talked Creole among themselves. The only responsibility of the Caribs is to keep open the bridge path which runs through their territory by cutting back the creepers and undergrowth.

The king and his council accompanied us from hut to hut of their little forest capital of Battaka. Most of the houses were built of

shingle or bamboo and palm trash, and scattered about singly in the woods. The women were pounding cassava in wooden mortars, sorting jute or cocoa-beans on cloths spread out on the ground, or weaving baskets. Many of these Carib women were fine looking, with smooth blank faces of pale copper colour, and long gleaming black hair. In one clearing an elderly Carib lay smoking in a hammock stretched between the doorpost and a calabash tree that suspended above his restful figure half-a-dozen heavy green balloons.

It is considered an indignity for the men to bear anything on their heads in the manner of their women and the Negroes. They carry their loads lashed on to a shelf which is supported at the sides by ovals of basketwork, the

whole being slung on their backs in the fashion of a haversack. Their little society is still a tangle of feuds and jealousies and they frequently resort to their own sorcerers, who practise a survival of their aboriginal magic known as *piai*. Belief in dreams and their interpretation plays a great part in their lives. One of their strangest customs is that of adopting a pseudonym, which they rigorously maintain whenever they undertake a long journey, so that any actions or gestures during their absences are considered to have been done by an unknown stranger. Death and burial are accompanied by elaborate wakes and fumigations which are often the occasion of celebration and dancing and the swallowing of enormous quantities of rum. The pleasures of drink are still as important to

The contours of Dominica are stifled by forest. Paw-paw, breadfruit, banana and sour-sop abound; coconuts are felled from the palms by nimble Caribs; and calabashes hang like pale green balloons





Carib girls, in their setting of exuberant vegetation reminiscent of the paintings of Gauguin, are washing their clothes in a rocky pool at the mouth of one of Dominica's innumerable little rivers

them as ever they were in the past. When legally obtained supplies are too dear, she-beens are sometimes erected in secret.

Indifference to money, inaptitude or scorn for trade, and a total lack of ambition render them, for many of their fellow-islanders, a perplexing community. They have a marked distrust and contempt for laws and taxations imposed from without. Their purpose is to keep their own way of life in the woods and on the sea unchanged, and with the minimum of interference from outside: a wish that seems, in spite of their many grumbles, to be fairly liberally indulged. Their food is mainly fish, and often, still, crabs, and, above all, cassava, yam and dasheen. They fish in the rivers at night by torchlight, and catch crayfish with cassava bait. Fish are also killed by

poisoning the mountain streams with *larouma*, a vegetable whose venom is innocuous to humans. Lobsters are captured by divers, and elaborate wicker pots are woven to entice and imprison turtles. Iguanas, which are one of their great delicacies, are hunted with a technique as strange as their ancient mode of parrot-catching. The hunter steals under the leafy haunt of one of these reptiles, and whistles to it gently for hours, until it is hypnotized into a sort of aesthetic trance. The little prehistoric dragon is gently lassoed, and then, bound hand and foot, carried joyfully home. They cultivate vegetable gardens in the high woods, which they clear by felling the trees and burning the bush. When they have exhausted the soil they move on and repeat the same process elsewhere. Little



The most notable survival of old Carib life is the manufacture of gommiers and pirogues. These dug-out canoes are fashioned from trees felled in the high woods and then hauled down to the coast, where they are expanded and hardened by the use of boulders and slow fires. Completed by the addition of stays and plank-bulwarks and fitted out with masts and sails, they are used for perilous sea journeys, often for the purpose of smuggling liquor from neighbouring French islands



parties of them, laden with their garden produce and with Carib baskets for sale, climb the footpaths over the watersheds and ravines to the market in Roseau.

Many of them were hacking with adzes and cutlasses at the insides of canoes. When a Carib purposes to make one of these *gommiers*, he chooses a tall *dacryoda hexandra* in the high woods and fells it at the time of the new moon. The shape is roughed out where it lies, and the centre excavated. The maker then summons his friends and the hull is dragged to the rhythm of special songs down to the foothills with ropes made of liana. There, under a tree near his hut, he trusses the ends and splays it open by filling it with water and then stones and, keeping the sides wide, like an alligator's mouth, with sticks, finally expands it amidships over a slow fire. The inside of the hull is ribbed and cross braces are inserted. The sides of the craft are heightened with planks which converge at one end in a high blade; the seams in the planks are caulked, and when its two masts and a mizzen and lugsail have been prepared, the vessel is ready for launching.

Travel by sea is still a passion among the Caribs; for trade, for smuggling, and sometimes purely for fun. They have been known to sail their canoes far beyond their little archipelago, sometimes as far as Cuba, the Guianas, and the Spanish Main. They have cronies in all the neighbouring islands, and frequently they return from their expeditions in a condition of ancestral tipsiness, harmlessly capsizing several times on the way. They are accomplished smugglers, and load their pirogues with pigs and chickens and turkeys, which they exchange for the cheap untaxed liquor in Marie Galante or the Saints or even Guadeloupe, and then slip back to their creeks without paying the excise duty. The Government send motor boats to patrol the island waters and catch them red-handed, but as the Caribs work by night and have known every cove and rock and current since centuries before the Europeans arrived in the Antilles, it is usually a vain task. A serious smuggling incident occurred in the thirties. Five policemen penetrated the Carib territory and seized a quantity of contraband rum and tobacco. A battle with sticks began and a riot ensued, with two Caribs killed and two injured, while some of the police suffered injuries. It was only quelled by the Navy dispatching a ship to the Carib waters which fired into the high woods with its heavy guns. It was then that, as a punishment, the kingship was abolished and the royal mace

carried away to Government House in Roseau.

It is a problem to know what course the authorities should take if a Carib commits a capital offence. For, being the last specimens of a race that is almost extinct, each pure Carib has a world-wide importance that transcends by far all legal considerations.

When the time came to leave the Carib capital, we sent the porters and ponies ahead to Salybia, and the king and his council accompanied us on foot. George Frederick is a dignified, rather melancholy grandee.

During a rest on the mountainside, we produced a bottle of whisky which we had bought at the Syrian shop. It did one good to see the way their eyes lit up. We drank in turns, and the enormous swigs of the Caribs brought the whisky-level down two inches at a time. I took out Mr Douglas Taylor's treatise on the Caribs, which gives a vocabulary of the few dozen Carib and Arawak words that have survived the deluge of Creole. None of them had ever seen it, and they were flattered and excited when they heard us clumsily pronouncing the words of their ancient tongue: *Ahahoua* or *Twahleiba*, a snake; *Aotou*, a fish; *Canoa*, *Couriala*, *Oucouni*, a boat; *Calleenago*, men; *Careepfouna*, women. . . An impish elder, who seemed the brightest of the council, pronounced a word that doubled them all up with laughter. The king archly whispered the meaning. This was followed by other words that sent them all into paroxysms of hilarity. It is clear that the improper terms of the ancient language will be the last to die.

Our three Negro porters looked substantial and normal after the Caribs, who, even after such a short time, began to seem as curious and unfamiliar as Martians. As we rode southwards we saw one or two more in the woods, a shade darker each time, but still straight-haired and Mongoloid, and the children, gathering sticks by the road, were as pretty as Japanese dolls. Finally the miscegenate fringe petered out and we were again in the heart of the Negro world.

Every few miles the porters sat down for a rest, and we dismounted and smoked cigarettes until it was time to move on. One of them was a good-looking young man, who sang Creole songs in a soft voice or whistled without ceasing. I asked him what he thought of the Caribs. "Dey're maad people," he answered, "but dey got lovely, lovely hair." His mouth opened in a large smile as he passed his palm over his own scalp: "Not like me."